

MT. PLEASANT

Changes made to proposed local septic, well inspection ordinance

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Changes were made to a draft ordinance regarding requiring inspections of septic and well systems prior to the transfer of property.

The Isabella County E. coli ad hoc committee met Tuesday in the county board of commissioners room in Mt. Pleasant to discuss changes to the proposed ordinance, which would require that an onsite sewage treatment and disposal system and a water supply system be inspected prior to a transfer of a property title to the land that is served by the septic system.

The goal of the proposed ordinance is to protect home buyers and to identify contamination sources in the community.

The committee decided to keep almost every exemption except a transfer subject to life lease or life estate until expiration, and transfer by redemption from a tax sale.

Several realtors in attendance spoke out against the proposed ordinance.

Mt. Pleasant realtor Larry Bean said realtors do inspections already.

"Almost all sales, us realtors do...the vast majority are doing expansive inspections

on their homes," Bean said.

A representative of Michigan Realtors said the organization is against the proposed ordinance, indicating they would like to see inspections done by aspects such as septic usage.

Lori Rhynard, executive officer of the Central Michigan Association of Realtors, said on Monday that the proposed ordinance affects everyone in rural Isabella County who wants to sell their home.

"Our position would be this ordinance would need more work. We're not opposed to inspections. We have a lot of problems with what they have presented to us thus far," Rhynard said.

She said that since Jan. 1, 2016 there have been almost 400 home sales in Isabella County that would have involved a well or septic system or both.

"You're taking a lengthy process and adding a huge cost to some sellers who can't afford more costs, and adding time to a closing that's taking close to six weeks now," she said.

A question in the proposal addresses potential delays in home sales, answering that the ordinance would require the health department to complete the report within five busi-

ness days or less after water sample results have been received from the inspected systems.

"This does not delay closings when the inspections are done in a timely manner," the proposed ordinance indicated. "Some sales are delayed when the inspection is done after an offer is tendered. This is particularly true if corrections are necessary. Since inspection results are good for 24 months, homeowners are encouraged to start the process when listing the home."

CMDHD health officer Steve Hall said Monday that the proposed ordinance is one way to protect resources such as surface water or ground water.

He said Michigan has 1.2 million onsite sewage disposal systems, with the state Department of Environmental Quality estimating that 10 percent, or 120,000 of those would be failed.

"A lot of the data of counties that have Time of Transfer programs, they see upwards of 30 percent failure at the time of transfer when they're evaluated," Hall said.

The new draft, including changes, will be reviewed and sent back to the ad hoc committee again before it is sent to the county commission for a potential vote.