

Supervisor, assemblyman to discuss air-quality issues on Grand Island

By Michael Canfield - Buffalo News Staff

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In an effort to track air pollution on Grand Island, Supervisor Nathan D. McMurray and Assemblyman John D. Ceretto are tentatively scheduled to meet Friday to discuss ways to assess air quality in the town.

The meeting stems from a letter that McMurray sent to Ceretto, D-Lewiston, earlier in the week, asking for an air-quality monitoring system for Grand Island. Ceretto said that he reached out to McMurray early Thursday morning and that the two have already discussed ways to address the issue.

One of the areas they will look at is whether the monitoring systems already in place in Tonawanda and Niagara Falls cover Grand Island, Ceretto said.

“If not, we’ll find out, and go from there,” he said.

Ceretto said his office has already developed a letter to the state Department of Environmental Conservation seeking information on the matter, which McMurray will look over.

“We’ll see if we’re missing anything,” he said.

McMurray said his concern over air pollution in the town started before he was elected supervisor last November.

“I would always think about Tonawanda Coke,” he said, referring to the Town of Tonawanda industrial plant across the Niagara River from Grand Island. “What is the impact here?”

After reaching out to the DEC and finding out that the monitoring systems are too expensive for the agency to place on Grand Island, McMurray reached out to Ceretto.

McMurray is seeking monitors that track “volatile organic compounds,” he said. “Those are what factories are belting out,” he said.

In the letter to Ceretto, McMurray cited Grand Island’s location in arguing for the monitors.

“While much of the heavy industry in New York is gone,” he wrote, “Grand Island is surrounded by it.”

A DEC study on air quality in the Tonawandas from 2007 also found elevated levels of air pollution at Beaver Island State Park on Grand Island, McMurray said.

“The study said that Beaver Island is polluted as bad as New York City or worse,” he said, noting that a DEC official he spoke with recently said that levels have gone down since the “crackdown on Tonawanda Coke.”

Despite the crackdown, McMurray raised questions about the impact on residents from past pollutants.

In the letter, he wrote, “And how do I reassure our residents that the air quality isn’t killing them?”

