

November 9, 2016

Dear Village of Aurora Residents:

Let me begin by personally thanking all of you who were kind enough to be present at my Inauguration on October 15th. It truly was an incredibly beautiful day in Aurora and I was deeply honored by the warm greetings extended on behalf of this wonderful village. I am truly so pleased to be at Wells College and am committed to sustaining our campus for many years into the future.

I want you all to be aware that there currently exists a significant infrastructure issue in Aurora that affects all of us. The water that comes into each of your homes, if you are on the village water system, comes from Wells College. The way it currently works is that the system pumps on average 80,000 gallons of water from the lake per day, through a filtering system in our physical plant building and then up to the College's water tower where gravity pulls water down to the campus and then to the village water system, ultimately filling the village's water tower on Sherwood Road. While the College offers a high quality of water, there are two major concerns that put us at risk of not being able to sustain that into the future; and it is critical that we focus on an alternate solution.

1. *Water plant mechanical failure due to age.* The College's water plant was built in 1929 and, while we have made many repairs and upgrades over time, its age puts us at risk of mechanical failures. In the past few months, our back-up pump broke down and needed to be replaced and the water main to our water tower broke just the other day. If we had not been able to make this immediate repair, you would have been without water. To completely renovate the Wells College water plant, and keep the College in the water business, would be costly and the College is not currently in a position to undertake this project.
2. *Water quality degradation beyond the Wells College system.* Water quality is lab-tested monthly and quarterly from various points along the distribution system. We know from our records of the water samples that when the water leaves the Wells College plant, it meets the standards set by the New York State Department of Health.

However, because of the nature of the “closed loop” system that exists, water can sit in the village’s water system and we have occasionally seen bacterial growth that has caused alerts from the Cayuga County Health Department. These alerts are nothing to be concerned about, but it is possible that this might not always be the case. If you ever need to be concerned about water quality, we are required by law to inform you immediately.

Although the College owns and operates the water plant, water is distributed through a system of pipes owned and maintained by the Village of Aurora. This is an issue which affects all of us and which we have a shared responsibility to resolve. The College and the village must work collaboratively to find a solution and develop a plan for an alternate source of water. I have been in discussions with Mayor Bonnie Bennett, The Inns of Aurora, the Cayuga County Economic Development Agency, the Cayuga County Chamber of Commerce and the regional Economic Development Authority, called CenterState CEO. I have spoken to our elected officials and will continue to do so. All recognize this is a serious issue, but to date there is no plan to remedy the situation.

I will continue to speak to all who have a vested interest in a positive outcome. The truth is there are only two possible solutions - we must either have a new water plant in Aurora or we must have an alternate source of water pumped to our village. These options are being discussed. The bottom line is that I want you all to be aware that something has to change; the College will not continue indefinitely to bear the liability of a municipal water supplier.

I will be meeting with Village Trustees in December to discuss this further, but it is important to me that you be aware that this is a significant issue for Wells College. I want you to understand that should we not be able to find a joint solution within the next few years, something will have to change and Wells College will, by necessity and for your health and well-being, no longer be able to provide water to the Village of Aurora. At some point, the risk and liability will be too high for us to continue doing what has been done for the past 87 years with nothing changing. Since the water you are provided comes from Wells College, I will be transparent and keep you informed as we move forward.

Thank you and have a wonderful holiday season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Gibralter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Jonathan Gibralter
President