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Pollution Action Remains Stalled

State action that could curb usage of a toxic industrial compound is still lodged in a committee of the State Natural Resources Board.

The board's Environmental Quality Committee deferred moving the issue after Board Member John Brogan asked for additional time to study the polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

Brogan is a stockholder in Ft. Howard Paper Co. of Green Bay, identified as one of the firms which puts substantial amounts of PCBs in water draining into Lake Michigan.

Brogan had promised a State Senate committee prior to his confirmation that he would abstain on matters affecting Ft. Howard.

The issue surfaced only briefly at Thursday's board meeting, when Committee Chairman Thomas Fox reported on the delay decided at Wednesday's committee meeting.

Fox indicated he intended to press the matter at the next meeting of the board scheduled in late June.

Brogan told an impromptu press conference late Thursday that he asked for the delay because he knew nothing about PCBs.

"I plead enormous ignorance on PCBs," he said.

He said it was difficult to vote on something when he didn't know the cause or what makes them injurious to the environment.

There was "not one iota, one scintilla, one scratch" of evidence on the subject in material presented by the DNR staff, Brogan said.

He was pressed on his earlier statement to the Senate committee about his relationship to Ft. Howard.

"If there were a potential conflict of interest, I'd act on the basis of my statement to the Senate," said Brogan.

Brogan said he would hold his appointment for six years, adding he hoped reporters would do more than worry about that type of issue.

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