

Today's Obituaries

Obituaries appear on page A2 for Ella H. Gregg, John Faircloth Park and John C. Utter Jr.

Daily Freeman

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Region

Briefs

Onteora trustees plan special meeting

BOICEVILLE — The Onteora Board of Education will meet Thursday to discuss past budget practices and hear the report of special counsel David Shaw and special auditor Randy Butts.

The meeting will be at 6 p.m. in the cafeteria of the Onteora Middle-Senior High School, Route 28.

The board is expected to enter into executive session after the public portion of the meeting to discuss a personnel matter.

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Session aids high school transition

SAUGERTIES — The Saugerties Junior and Senior High School will hold a transition session for incoming freshmen on Monday, Jan. 15, from 6 to 8 p.m.

Attorney general, GE spar

■ The state Attorney General's Office's allegations that GE illegally dumped PCBs is false, according to a GE spokesman.

By MICHAEL McCAGG
Freeman staff

THE STATE Attorney General's Office is adding detail to its allegations that GE illegally dumped some of the more than 1 million pounds of PCBs in the Hudson River that the U.S. EPA is now planning to force the company to clean up.

But a spokesman for GE on Monday called the allegations false.

Amidst the escalating public relations war between GE and environmental groups over the controversial dredging plan, Assistant Attorney General

Peter Lehner disputed in a letter to the editor GE's contention that the dumping of the toxic PCBs into the river was legal.

Following on Attorney General Eliot Spitzer's allegation last fall that the dumping was illegal, Lehner alleges in the letter that the company discharged the majority of the chemicals before acquiring a permit to do so; does not possess a permit for current seepage of the chemicals into the river; and has on "numerous occasions" exceeded its permitted PCB discharge levels.

LEHNER IS THE head of Spitzer's Environmental Protection Bureau.

"The record should be clear that GE's very large discharges prior to 1975 were not authorized by any permit," said

Lehner, "that the continuing seepage of PCBs into the river is not authorized by any permit and that certain of GE's discharges both before and after 1975 have been unlawful." Lehner charged that GE never sought a federal permit to discharge the chemicals until 1973 — 22 years after it began discharging the PCBs into the river.

Two years later, Lehner alleged, a state administrative judge ruled that the company's discharges from 1972 until 1975 violated state law because they "breached applicable standards of water quality." In its public relations campaign against the Environmental Protection Agency's \$460 million proposal to dredge upriver hot spots of PCBs, GE, which would bear cost of the cleanup, has maintained that it "legally"

dumped the PCBs into the river.

A spokesman for the company, Mark Behan, said on Monday that the allegations are false and continued the company's stance that the dumping was legal.

"WHO IS THE AG's office trying to kid? They are talking about events that took place 25 years ago of which they have no first-hand knowledge," Behan said.

In fact, the spokesman said, the administrative law judge's determination cited by Lehner was nullified by an agreement the company reached with the state in 1976.

That agreement, Behan said, was signed by the then-Department of Environmental Conservation commissioner and states that there was "no finding that

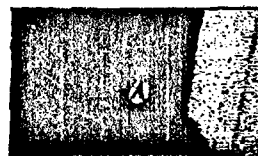
GE violated any law or regulation."

He went on to say that there were no permits needed to dump the PCBs prior to 1972 and no agency to get them from.

BEHAN ADDED that GE has been working "closely" with the state on cleaning up the upriver plant sites where the seepage is occurring and the company has never been told that it needs permits for that pollution.

PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls, were used as insulating material in transformers and other electrical equipment. They have been linked to cancer in laboratory animals.

GE dumped the chemicals into the river over a 30-year period ending in 1977, when the practice was banned.



Village sends legal bills over