

HERMITAGE

Shale shelf will reduce costs

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By Joe Pinchot, *Herald Staff Writer*

It appears Hermitage Municipal Authority will not have to spend so much to hold up the new anaerobic digester at the Broadway Avenue water pollution control plant. In September, officials said tests had shown the soil where the digester will be built had been washed down by flooding over the years and was not sufficiently packed to hold up the digester.

Officials feared they would have to pay an extra \$395,000 to build 46, 45-foot-long concrete pilings under the digester. Friction between the soil and the piles is expected to provide the proper support. However, additional tests have shown there is a shale shelf on part of the site. In one area, the shelf is only 6 feet deep, and it slopes to about 30 feet deep, said consulting engineer Joseph P. Pacchioni.

In another part of the site, bores were made 50 feet down and nothing solid was found, he said. In some areas, the pilings will be shorter, made to rest on the shale, which should mean a lower cost to the authority, officials said. A test piling will be installed to help engineers decide how many pilings will be built, where they will be built, and how long they must be, Pacchioni said.

The digester is part of a \$32 million expansion of the plant, which was ordered by the state Department of Environmental Protection to stop raw sewage from entering Bobby Run during heavy flow periods.

Contractors are moving equipment and some excavation has begun, officials said. The digester will “cook” sludge and food waste to create a biogas that will be burned to generate electricity that will be sold to the power grid, and a high-quality sludge that will not have to be trucked to a landfill for disposal.