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# Shelby Township, Ford agree to settle pollution lawsuit

## Automaker agrees to clean, monitor site of former plant



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By FRANK DeFRANK  
 frank.defrank@macombdaily.com;  
 @fdefrank

Shelby Township and Ford Motor Co. apparently have agreed to settle a lawsuit over pollution at the site of the former Visteon plant near 23 Mile and Mound roads.

At its regular meeting this week, the township Board of Trustees agreed by a 6-0 vote to accept a recommendation from attorney Robert Huth and settle the legal dispute that has lingered in the courts for 15 months.

Township officials said Ford has agreed to clean

up pollution at the site, monitor the area for future problems and pay \$50,000 to the township to offset costs of the litigation.

"It sounds to me like Ford Motor Co. is on the hook for this property forever," said Rick Stathakis, Shelby Township supervisor.

Township attorney Robert Huth, who negotiated the settlement, amended the supervisor's statement: "As long as this (pollution) is an issue, Ford Motor Co. is on the hook."

Company officials offered a more cautious comment about the devel-

opment.

"Ford takes this issue seriously and remains committed to doing what is right for the community and the environment," the statement read. "We are working on the terms of a settlement. Until that is finalized, we are not able to provide additional information."

At issue is groundwater contamination near the site of a closed Ford plant — contamination that the township's environmental expert said could cost as much as \$150 million to

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PLEASE SEE LAWSUIT/A-10



# LAWSUIT

FROM PAGE A-1

clean up.

Specifically, health-threatening chemicals TCE (trichloroethylene) and TCA (trichloroacetic) were found in the groundwater during tests, and township officials feared the problem could threaten homes in the nearby Central Park Manor subdivision as well as the township's baseball fields near 23 Mile Road and Van Dyke.

But tests did not show

the pollution spreading. Last July, Ford attorney Kenneth McIntyre sug-

gested during court proceedings that prior plant occupants — among them



Macomb Daily graphic by Kevin J. Martin

Visteon, Packard and the U.S. Air Force — could be responsible for the pollution.

The point will become moot if the sides follow through on their settlement agreement, reached late last week with prodding from Macomb Circuit Judge Richard Caretti, Huth said.

"I'm pleased with what Ford added to the proposal on Friday," Huth said. "This is not everything we asked for, but I'm satisfied."

Ford's plan to clean up pollution "hot spots" and monitor the site for

future problems must be approved by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. That process could take several months.

"I don't want to call it a finish line, but at least now we'll have some progress by the first quarter of 2014," Stathakis said.

Huth said the township's top priority was to protect the health and welfare of residents living near the pollution site as well as those who use the township's nearby recreation facilities. The agreement does that, he said.

"I believe this is the best deal for the township to protect residents," Huth said.

The 205-acre parcel on the southeast corner of Mound and 23 Mile roads was home to Ford's Utica Trim Plant for many years and later spun off to Visteon. The facility was phased out in 2008 and 2009 and eventually closed.

Another company, Indiana Metals, purchased the site in 2011 and was in the process of demolishing buildings when the pollution was discovered.