



# TOWN OF NEW CASTLE

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Supervisor

**Robert J. Greenstein**  
(914) 238-4774

April 3, 2018

Council Members

**Lisa S. Katz**  
Deputy Town Supervisor  
(914) 238-4774

**BY EMAIL AND MAIL**

Honorable George Latimer, Westchester County Executive  
Honorable Members of the Westchester County Department of Health  
Honorable Michael B. Kaplowitz, Westchester County Legislator

**Hala Makowska**  
(914) 238-4774

**Ivy A. Pool**  
(914) 238-4774

Re: Radium Well Contamination at Sunshine Home, 15 Spring Valley Road  
Ossining, Town of New Castle, NY

**Jeremy M. Saland**  
(914) 238-4774

Dear County Executive Latimer, Members of the Board of Health,  
and Legislator Kaplowitz,

Town Administrator  
**Jill Simon Shapiro**  
(914) 238-4742

Westchester County is home to urban cities, suburban hamlets, rural areas and seemingly untouched open space. As fortunate as we all are to have access to the greatest city, we also know that outside our respective backdoors or a short ride away, there is a pristine environment that feeds not merely our need for the outdoors, but the water we drink, air we breathe and abundant wildlife living among us.

As both residents of Westchester County and elected officials serving the Town of New Castle, we write to call attention to your collective mission of promoting health, preventing disease and prolonging meaningful life for all Westchester residents. To that end, we ask that you pay close attention to the expansion of the Sunshine Children's Home (SCH), located in the ecologically sensitive Greater Teatown region. The Greater Teatown area is also located in the Indian Brook Reservoir watershed.

The Sunshine Home, along with the residents of Greater Teatown, relies solely on well water. Our concern is not only the impact on the physical environment but continued access to and potability of the groundwater that replenishes wells drawn upon by local residents and the children and staff of SCH.

Historically, SCH has utilized three wells on its property for drinking water and operational purposes. In February of 2016, SCH was issued a notice of violation after four consecutive quarterly tests of its drinking water exceeded the maximum contaminant level of radium. Based on the documentation we have reviewed, Well #3 carried the highest level of radium contamination. As a result, it was taken offline and SCH relied on blended water from Wells #1 and #2.

We are advised that in or around November of 2017, SCH brought Well #3 back online while it took Well #1 offline to deepen it and perform related work. Our understanding is that the goal of deepening Well #1 was to identify a water source that can be used to "blend" with Well #3 on an ongoing basis for the purpose of lowering the presence of

radium in the drinking water to an acceptable limit. To our knowledge, Well #1 has remained offline since November 2017. As an interim measure, we are advised that SCH has been relying upon bottled drinking water at its facility for the purpose of consumption by staff, visitors and its resident children, but SCH continues to use water from Well #3 for other purposes.

If our understanding is accurate, the above raises multiple questions that we respectfully ask that you answer through the Westchester County Department of Health (WDOH):

- What is the status of the violation that previously closed Well #3? How did WDOH address the violation? Was SCH required to take any corrective measures? If so, has WDOH verified that those measures were implemented?
- What are WDOH's current water quality monitoring protocols at the SCH facility? How frequently is SCH's water quality tested and what procedures are followed?
- What are the latest test results for Well #3?
- What assurances do staff, children and visitors at SCH have that they are not being exposed to dangerous amounts of radium in their water through the use of Well #3?
  - What procedures has SCH implemented to ensure that water from Well 3 is not consumed inadvertently? Did SCH seek guidance from WDOH regarding such procedures? Has WDOH inspected the facility to verify the efficacy of such procedures?
  - Can water that is non-potable due to the presence of elevated radium levels nevertheless be safely used for washing, cleaning and other activities? What is the generally accepted level of radium for such purposes?
- Does WDOH have any reason to believe that the deepening of Well #1 to increase its yield could negatively impact the water quantity or quality available from the private wells of area residents? Could this action negatively impact (the recharging of) Indian Brook Reservoir?
- How will WDOH verify the safety of SCH's drinking water if/when Well #3 is once again used as a source of potable water? After all, nobody wants to see unsafe water consumed for even one day, let alone have an unsafe condition persist for weeks or more. In short, we believe there is no margin for error when it comes to the safety of drinking water in our community.

Recently, we were advised that SCH intends to implement a radium removal system that may address certain concerns about the quality of SCH's drinking water and the need to blend water to achieve potability. We would appreciate receiving further information from WDOH about the planned radium removal system at SCH.

WDOH is in a unique position to best ensure local residents, children and staff do not drink or use water contaminated with radium. Long-term exposure to radium is linked to an increase of various cancers. This health risk is not lost on the EPA and the municipality of New Castle shares this very real concern. Simply, we can never be too cautious. Failure to monitor wells and water and enforce best practices can result in catastrophic and irreversible consequences. At bottom, the safety of all of us, both children and adults, is paramount.

Please keep us informed regarding the results of your investigation into the potential existence of radium in the water at SCH, plans to mitigate the presence of radium and steps that will be implemented to protect the aquifer for use by all residents and the safety of SCH. We would greatly appreciate a written response to the questions above from WDOH at its earliest opportunity.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Respectfully,

TOWN BOARD, TOWN OF NEW CASTLE

Robert J. Greenstein, Town Supervisor  
Lisa S. Katz, Deputy Town Supervisor  
Jeremy Saland, Councilmember  
Hala Makowska, Councilmember  
Ivy A. Pool, Councilmember

cc: Town of New Castle Zoning Board of Appeals  
Sabrina Charney Hull, Director of Planning  
Sunshine Children's Home