

Solo plan for local landfill is put forth

Forsyth prefers a landfill deal with Stokes

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JOURNAL REPORTER

Sunday, February 10, 2008



(Journal map by Jeremy Boyd)

Forsyth County may try to go it alone with a construction and demolition landfill if a deal can't be worked out with Stokes County.

The City-County Utilities Division has put together a draft plan showing how an access road to the landfill and all of the landfill operations could take place on the Forsyth County side of the 435-acre tract. About 315 acres of the site are in Forsyth County, with the rest in Stokes.

The landfill would take construction and demolition debris, and replace the one on Old Salisbury Road, which may be full by 2014.

Stokes County uses the existing landfill and was expected to use the new one as well. Officials with the utilities division say that is still the best approach, and that they hope to reach agreement with Stokes County.

"If we cannot, and Stokes County does not pursue approving the land-use plan in Stokes County, we need to develop a Forsyth County entrance onto the site," said David Saunders, the director of the City-County Utilities Division.

First announced in 2005, the site ran into immediate opposition from Stokes County neighbors, who don't want a landfill in their rural area. The site hit another snag when it turned out that the purchase of the land by Winston-Salem was not done with the permission of the Stokes County government, as state law requires when a municipality buys property in another county. Although the utilities division had planned to ask Stokes County for a rezoning on the Stokes portion of the land, that never happened.

Saunders said that efforts are going forward to restart discussions with Stokes. But if it turns out that Stokes won't be a partner, Saunders said, the utilities division has to go forward with some plan that will handle Forsyth County's waste needs.

Original plans called for the entrance to the landfill to be off Fagg Road in Stokes County. Janis

McHargue, the solid-waste administrator for the utilities division, said that the new design has the entry to the site directly across from where Steele Road - in Forsyth County - intersects with U.S. 311.

Another feature of the new design is that it would eliminate the railroad crossing where Salem Chapel Road intersects U.S. 311, McHargue said. To do that, Salem Chapel Road would be extended north a short distance to hook up to the new road leading into the landfill.

Norfolk Southern, which owns the rail tracks, has given its tentative approval to the design, McHargue said.

Even if Stokes decides to use the landfill, utilities officials said they think that the new design might be better than the one that had access from Stokes County. If the commission decides to pursue the change, the project would have to go back to the City-County Planning Board and the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners for approval.

Leon Inman, the chairman of the Stokes County Board of Commissioners, said that the next move is up to Forsyth.

"They have never made a request for rezoning in Stokes County," Inman said. "It is a waiting game."

Inman said he had not heard that Forsyth County might go it alone with a landfill. He said he was surprised that Forsyth officials might try to do that with the legality of the land purchase up in the air.

Saunders said that the failure to get approval from Stokes to buy the part of the site in Stokes County doesn't affect Forsyth County's ownership and ability to use the part of the site that is in Forsyth.

Wayne Morton, one of the landfill opponents, said that a plan that includes only the Forsyth County side of the tract is still a bad idea.

"We don't have the roads up here for it," he said. "I don't want to see it up here, period. I would like to see it not come because of the traffic and because of the land. It is prime land."

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