

## Officials delay landfill decision

### *Emotions run high at public hearing*

By James Romoser

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It will be at least three months before Forsyth County commissioners decide on a controversial plan to build a construction-and-demolition landfill in the northeast part of the county.

The commissioners voted 7-0 last night to delay the matter until May.

The vote came after more than 100 residents who live near the proposed site of the landfill packed the commissioners room and lashed out against the proposal at a heated public hearing.

"We've got a very nice rural area. That's why we moved here in the first place. We'd like to keep it that way," Keith Hibner, who lives less than a mile from the site, told the commissioners. "I'd like to ask you to have no landfill in this area."

The landfill, if approved, would be on a 434-acre site that straddles the border of Forsyth and Stokes counties. The site is just to the east of U.S. 311.

As a construction-and-demolition landfill, it would not accept household trash or general garbage. It would take in mainly debris from construction projects, including wood, concrete and roofing material.

County officials said that construction-and-demolition landfills do not pose large environmental risks and do not have a severe impact on surrounding communities.

"The bottom line is that the waste must go somewhere, and we as a community have made the decision that we want public options for waste management," said Don Nielsen, a legal counsel for the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Utility Commission.

The county's current construction-and-demolition landfill, on Old Salisbury Road, has about 10 years of capacity left. The county generated about 150,000 tons of construction-and-demolition debris in the 2004-05 fiscal year, officials said.

Opening the new landfill is estimated to cost up to \$10 million and would take several years.

Most area residents have opposed the landfill since they learned of it several months ago. Last night, eight of them spoke at the public hearing, drawing several standing ovations from the crowd.

James Bullard, who lives halfway between Walkertown and Walnut Cove, asked the commissioners to raise their hands if they would like to live next to a landfill. The commissioners fidgeted in their seats and remained silent.

Other speakers raised concerns about more noise and truck traffic, possible groundwater contamination and the effect on nearby property values.

The Rev. Larry Neal said that the landfill would hurt his church, the 151-year-old Salem Chapel Christian Church, which he said is 46 feet from the border of the site.

After the public hearing, Commissioner Walter Marshall said he could not vote in favor of the

landfill because of environmental concerns and the impact on surrounding property.

"It's not a matter of what will get into the water, but when, because it will happen sooner or later," Marshall said, with the crowd applauding.

Utilities officials said that no water contamination has ever been found at the county's current construction-and-demolition landfill.

Shortly after Marshall's remarks, Commissioner Richard Linville made a motion to postpone the matter so that commissioners can get answers to additional questions, such as those about the environmental impact. Linville's motion passed unanimously.

The commissioners have jurisdiction only over the 316-acre part of the site within Forsyth County. The rest of the site, which extends north into Stokes County, would need approval from Stokes commissioners. Stokes has not acted on the issue.

Residents who are opposed to the landfill saw last night's postponement as a victory.

"We made them blink," Hibner said after the meeting. A few minutes later, he added: "We made them think."

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