



PRESS-REGISTER

Landfill is recommended, but then panel disbanded

Tuesday, November 27, 2007

By **CONNIE BAGGETT**
Staff Reporter

REPTON -- Conecuh County commissioners heard a recommendation on Monday to approve a proposed landfill and promptly voted to disband the citizens committee that wrote the report.

Some commissioners said that the committee strayed from its mission to gather facts, and all said arguments on both sides of the landfill debate are wearing thin.

The committee report recommended approval of the 1,551-acre Repton-area landfill, with certain conditions.

Landfill developers publicized the report Nov. 16, but commissioners first saw it Monday at their regular meeting.

Representatives of landfill developer Conecuh Woods lauded the committee as the only unbiased group to study the proposal. Landfill opponents said bias marred the report and the committee that authored it. Some committee members, opponents said, have business ties to the developer or the landfill industry.

Commissioners, unhappy that they had to wait for copies of the same report that the committee turned over to Conecuh Woods days ago, said they did not appoint committee members to make recommendations. They expected the panel to find facts and turn those facts over to the County Commission first.

Commissioner D. K. Bodiford said: "I really am not interested in their recommendations. They were supposed to gather facts for and against. ... I told the developers early on that landfills don't sit well with people, and that's who we represent."

Opposition group chairman Johnny Andrews challenged the committee in recent weeks for holding closed meetings and refusing to allow the media to attend.

County Attorney Richard Nix said the group was a public body and had to open the meetings. At the first such open meeting, on Nov. 15, the group voted to recommend approval of the landfill.

Conecuh Woods representative Jimmy Stone applauded the report and condemned efforts by opposition groups to challenge the committee members' objectivity.

Stone and David Kirby are listed as principals in the development company, and both have said they live in the Tampa Bay, Fla., area.

Stone's address on Conecuh Woods incorporation papers is in New York. He has work experience as a developer.

Kirby is a regional manager for Tenax, which makes landfill liners and operates a plant in Evergreen.

Conecuh County Solid Waste Advisory Committee members were Winston Foshee, the county engineer, who lives in Butler County; Daryl Harper, an economic recruiter for Evergreen and Conecuh who worked as a horticulturist and sales person for the Evergreen company that makes landfill liners; Marc McIntyre, a businessman who lives in Covington County but owns buildings in Evergreen, including the office where Conecuh Woods is renting space; Larry Ryland, who said he retired as a professor at Lurleen B. Wallace Community College in Andalusia; Don Smith, an engineer; and Odessa Wallace who said she had close ties with late Realtor Les Prouty who brokered the landfill property option.

The committee report set out conditions for developers, such as abiding by state and federal guidelines, banning hazardous waste, maintaining buffers and developing an industrial park.

Smith said he declined to vote on the recommendation because it was not the committee's defined task. He said he noticed bias within the committee in favor of the landfill. Smith said his wife, Dr. June Serravezza, has been an outspoken member of opposition group Citizens for a Clean Southwest Alabama.

McIntyre denied any bias. He said he believes landfills are safe, and the county needs the money.

He said he rents office space to Conecuh Woods for \$440 a month.

Andrews said Stone and Kirby visited homes in the Repton area following the report, explaining that local officials supported their project.

Resident Lois McMillan said Stone and Kirby came to her Repton home saying a Mr. Tate sent them. She said she knows of no Tate who sent them, but she asked them to leave and not return.

Resident Othama Watson said Stone and Kirby arrived at her home, saying they were going to be her neighbors.

"They said Mr. Kilmer Bodiford had been riding with them, and they wanted me to smell some garbage treated with chemicals. They said it was OK'd by Mr. Bodiford, and he approved it."

Watson said she has asthma and did not want any landfill near her home.

Conecuh Woods spokesman Phillip Kinney of the Matrix public relations firm said Stone and Kinney did visit but never used any commissioner's name.

Kinney said the accusations about committee bias are "a new level of dirty politics and lies by (the opposition group). Rather than discuss the landfill project based on facts, (the opposition) is now starting personal attacks on citizens" on the committee.

© 2007 Press-Register

© 2007 al.com All Rights Reserved.