

JUMP Conecuh Woods

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In an answer to the over whelming concerns of citizens from Conecuh and surrounding counties, the investors hoping to build a landfill along Alabama Highway 41 just south of Repton met with the Conecuh County Commission last Wednesday in Evergreen to offer their presentation on what the facility would be like.

Jim McNaughton, who is a solid waste industry expert with over 25 years of experience and who specializes in the development of municipal solid waste facilities, according to an introduction provided by Conecuh Woods spokesman Patrick Slevin addressed the commissioners and the standing-room-only crowd that packed into the meeting room. He said the landfill will be designed and built by SCS Engineers, whose corporate offices are in Long Beach, Calif. with other offices in 19 states including Florida and Georgia, and that 70 percent of the 5,115 acres will be used for buffer zone.

“That’s opposite of what is most common across the country where 70 percent is used for disposal and 30 percent is used for buffer,” McNaughton said. “And only 1/4 to one acre will be in use at any time. The rest will be covered and the working face [the portion in use on a daily basis] will be covered at the end of each working day.”

The disposal portion of the landfill will be 2,500 feet from Hwy. 41, which he said is 25 times the required setback.

McNaughton then presented satellite imagery from several landfill sites in Florida, including one in Pinellas County, which is where St. Petersburg is located, that has several high-dollar developments going in around it.

“This landfill is across the road from the closed landfill in that community,” he said. “The county is currently planning to build a \$870 million convention center that will employ 8,900 people on top of the closed landfill across from the existing one. And there is a \$2 billion mixed-use residential development just south of the landfill that butts up to the facility. Nearly 41,000 people live within two miles of this landfill.”

He also presented images of the South Dade County landfill, which has Black Creek as one border. Black Creek empties into Biscayne Bay, he said.

McNaughton showed photos of another landfill that is within two miles of the Everglades, one of the nation’s most protected national parks, he said.

“There’s a country club and a large residential area right next to this landfill,”

McNaughton said. “Modern landfills are heavily regulated and they don’t pose the threat to people the landfills of the old days may have.”

He also said there are three landfills within the metropolitan area of Houston, Texas and Charlotte Motor Speedway is built on top of a closed landfill.

He then presented a video from a 1992 “20/20” special on the City of Riverview, Mich. Longtime ABC reporter John Stossel narrated the video as he visited the people of Riverview and the various sites around the town.

He said 16 communities from around the city haul their trash to the landfill and the money from it had built many new facilities in the town, including a new school and a new city hall.

The taxes in Riverview are also among the lowest in the area, he said, and at the time more than 100 new and expensive homes were being built adjacent to the landfill property.

There was a ski resort on top of the closed portion of the landfill, but that has since been closed because of warmer winters and a lack of snow. Stossel said there was a 27-hole golf course around the base of the town's "Mt. Trashmore," as residents call it.

Several citizens in the town said they actually liked the landfill and the landfill has caused no major health problems.

After the video, McNaughton said they are planning to have a \$25 million investment before the landfill even opens and Conecuh Woods will be a good neighbor to the county and its citizens.

"We will be committed to the people of Conecuh County," McNaughton said.

Al Agricola, a Montgomery-based attorney working with Conecuh Woods, extended an invitation to the commissioners before the meeting closed.

"We can arrange a tour of a landfill designed and built by SCS," Agricola said. "That way you can come and see and sniff for yourselves."

After the meeting, Commission Chairman Wendell Byrd said he was still undecided and open-minded.

"I'm still not sold one way or the other," Byrd said. "I'm remaining completely open and I will wait to see what the other side has to say."

Conecuh Woods also purchased airtime on 101.1 FM in Evergreen Thursday morning and during the broadcast McNaughton said the company was "putting the final touches on the application" they will submit to the commission.

Slevin said Tuesday that they have not determined "when or if the application will be filed" and they presented the workshop to the commission to "respond to the concerns of the citizens."

Slevin also said the group is finding more and more support in the community.

When asked about Monroeville realtor Les Prouty's death, Slevin said, "Monroeville has certainly lost one of its greatest sons. Les' word was his bond and he staked his reputation on this landfill. We are committed to seeing it through."

Prouty, who held the option to buy the 5,115-acre site for the landfill, died Sunday.