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DENR asked to consider human factor

By [Shawn Daley](#) Editor
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For more than six decades, New Hill has been a great source of pride for the African-American community.

It has been one of the few places in the area where blacks have owned their own property and handed it down to the following generations.

So when it was finally revealed that the Cary-led Western Wake Partners, which includes Apex, Holly Springs and Morrisville, were planning to build a regional sewage plant in the heart of New Hill it came as a devastating blow.

"Basically, the African-Americans in New Hill have owned that land 40, 50 and 60 years," said Elaine Thomas Joyner. "Not many African-Americans own property in this area.

"They worked hard and their intent was to pass that land on to their children and welcome other African-Americans into the community. This sewage plant will devalue that property. There is also the issue of a sewage plant coming into an African-American community and what that means to us."

Joyner, 51, was only five years old when her family moved to New Hill. She, seven siblings and her parents lived at 8305 Stewart Road for many years.

Although she lives in Friendship now, Joyner still attends First New Hill Baptist Church and has close ties to the community.

At a public hearing held last Thursday at Apex Town Hall by the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Joyner spoke of the injustice of forcing a sewage plant on the residents of New Hill.

"Minorities, especially African-Americans, have endured great atrocities throughout the history of this country in which we live," said Joyner. "We have been subjected to the brutality and inhumanity of slavery. We have been lynched for the color of our skin. We have been assaulted with injustices and inequalities.

"And now the Western Wake Partners want to dump their sewage on us and hope that we feel good about it. Well, we don't and we won't."

Apex Town Councilman Bill Jensen asked DENR officials to look beyond the plant's affects on

the environment and also take into consideration its affects on the "human ecosystem."

"There are other sites east of Highway 1 that are located in less populated areas than the selected site," said Jensen. "There is also a site one mile south of the selected site that provides for almost identical infrastructure and costs and it does not impact New Hill folks to the extent the selected site does. This site was never formally considered.

"The selected site could not be worse for our friends and neighbors living in New Hill. Their ecosystem of families, homes, churches and businesses will be irreparably damaged by this proposed wastewater facility. The New Hill folks and their ecosystem must be considered along with the impacts on other natural resources."

Although Weatherly approved the site selection by sending a letter to Cary, the town council never formally voted on the matter.

Both Jensen and fellow councilman Bill Sutton have repeatedly requested to have a formal vote on the matter but their attempts were denied by councilmen Bryan Gossage, Mike Jones and Gene Schulze.

Jensen asked DENR to use a more open-minded approach.

"I am asking you, I am begging you," said Jensen. "Please vigorously consider the human aspect of this site selection along with all the other environmental considerations.

"Please use a wide lens to view the implications of this wastewater facility site. Use your long-term, wide range vision to guide the Western Wake Partners toward a better site based on compassion and concern for our friends and neighbors in New Hill."

Nearly everyone in attendance gave Jensen a standing ovation following his remarks.

Joyner said the entire controversy has made New Hill a more closely knit community.

"We have all come together over this," said Joyner. "The white residents are the ones who informed us of the plans for the plant and they've really included us every step of the way.

"But while it's nice that we've all been able to come together that certainly doesn't mean we want that sewage plant."