

Neighbors protest sewer site choice

New Hill area targeted for regional facility

BY ADAM ARNOLD
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Residents in New Hill are worried about their community becoming known as "Phew Hill."

They came out by the hundreds Tuesday to parade and raise a stink about the proposed site for a regional sewer plant across Old U.S. 1 from the community's historic district.

The Town of Cary, the lead agency for the project along with partners Apex, Morrisville and Holly Springs, held an information meeting at Apex Fire Station 2 just south of the area to get word out about the project.

But residents had a message of their own: Nobody asked them before the 211-acre site was selected — and the plant is not the sort of neighbor they would

choose.

"They came up with the idea before anybody knew and then they come tell us," said lifelong area resident Wayne Richardson of the towns' plan. "It's sort of like having a child and then saying you're pregnant."

The towns are working together to build the plant at an estimated cost of more than \$190 million. They have an agreement with the state from 2001 to start returning water to the Cape Fear River basin that is currently discharged into the Neuse River basin by Jan. 1, 2011.

Work on plant siting has been under way for several years.

According to a town staff report from July 2004, the four towns have budgeted about \$11 million for a site.

The New Hill site, of the 29 considered, would have the lowest cost to pump the discharge to the river, a siting report says.

The New Hill site also outscored the others because, among other things, it has the fewest property owners and residences to deal

with, is in Wake County and offers the best potential for expansion, according to the report.

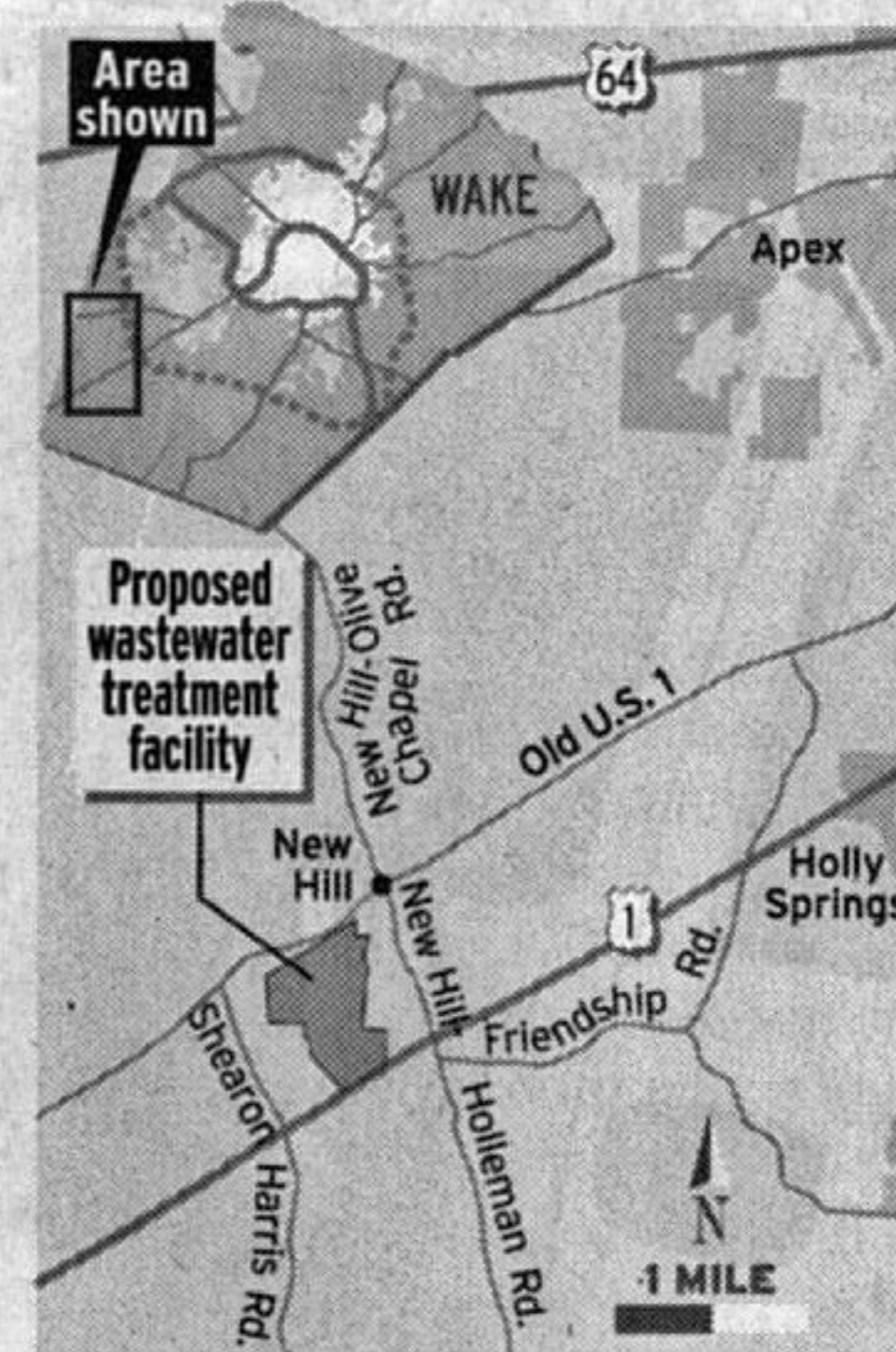
Bob Kelly, whose family has lived in New Hill for more than a century and is a leader of a nascent anti-sewer plant organization, said the parade was "just to show we are united and so forth and sticking together as a community."

Kelly said the group is already interviewing attorneys to look at the community's legal options.

Wearing an "A, B, C" tag on his T-shirt — for "Anybody But Cary" — Kelly called the towns' meeting "a waste of our time."

"They keep telling us a decision hasn't been made, but last Tuesday they were ready to condemn the property," Kelly said. "Why are you ready to condemn the property if the decision hasn't been made?"

A Cary council committee delayed a decision earlier this month to vote on condemning the property. The matter is expected to be on the agenda for next week's council meeting.



Sources: Town of Cary; Wake County

The gathering gave Cary Town Council member Marla Dorrel pause.

"I'm leaving here this evening with questions for the staff about the property acquisition and condemnation process to see whether now is the time that we must proceed," Dorrel said.

Cary Town Council member Michael Joyce said he wants the site blessed by the Wake County Board of Commissioners, the only local elected body directly accountable to the New Hill area residents.

"There's no representation from the municipalities of these folks," Joyce said.

Wake County Manager David Cooke said that could get complicated.

The county took the lead on the early site-selection process before passing the baton to Cary and was not involved in choosing the final site.

Cooke said reviewing the selection of the New Hill site would almost certainly mean the county would have to pick back up where it left off.

"We feel good about the process that was used," Cooke said.

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