

## New Hill folks fume over Cary sewer vote

By TOBY COLEMAN, Staff Writer

CARY -- The Town Council took a major step Thursday toward forcing an unincorporated village to the town's south to host a new sewage treatment plant for the western part of Wake County.

Residents of New Hill opposed to the plan fumed in silence as the council voted 4-3 to condemn more than 210 acres of land in their village for a plant slated to treat as much as 18 million gallons of sewage a day.

"Cary is like everybody says," said Wayne Cross of New Hill after the vote. "They're an empire and out for what they can get."

Mayor Ernest McAlister said the town had to move to condemn the land Thursday to make sure that a new sewage plant would be ready to dump waste from Apex, Cary, Holly Springs and Morrisville into the Cape Fear River basin by late 2010.

"A vote to delay this is a vote to delay the project," he said. "And we can't take that risk."

The vote starts a new process that will begin with the group that wants to build the plant, the Western Wake Partnership, studying what a sewage treatment plant could do to New Hill's environment. The state Department of Environment and Natural Resources could begin holding hearings on the plan as early as this fall, according to Cary spokeswoman Susan Moran.

New Hill residents said they will continue their efforts to torpedo plans to put the sewage plant near the heart of the town. They say that if the Western Wake Partnership wants to put the plant in New Hill, it should put the facility on land closer to the Shearon Harris nuclear plant.

New Hill resident Paul Barth said the village residents face an uphill battle.

"Once things get done, it's a done deal," said Barth, who is the head of the New Hill Community Association, a group created earlier this week to fight plans for the new sewage plant.

Cary and other western Wake County towns want to build a sewage plant in New Hill so they can dump treated sewage in the Cape Fear River. The towns have decided that piping their sewage down to the Cape Fear is the best way to fulfill a state mandate to start dumping sewage in the same river basin from which they take their water. The plant is part of a \$193 million project, funded by the towns, that also includes two new pumping stations and connecting pipelines.

When New Hill residents learned of the towns' plans a few weeks ago, they began crying foul. In the last week, they convinced the Wake County Commissioners and the Apex Town Commissioners to ask Cary to delay condemnation proceedings until next month so more research could be done on alternative sites.

In the end, though, the Cary Town Council held all the power because it was the lead partner in the Western Wake Partnership. And on Thursday, a majority of the Town Council refused to delay.

"This is not simple, it's not easy and it's not fun," said Councilwoman Marla Dorrel before voting to condemn the land.

Other council members, though, said they thought the town should slow down and investigate alternative sites. Councilwoman Julie Robison said that condemning the site "means we're not looking at other alternatives."

Councilman Michael Joyce felt so bad about the vote that he felt compelled to offer his apologies to the New Hill residents.

"I'm sorry," he said.

**Staff writer Toby Coleman can be reached at 829-8937 or [tcoleman@newsobserver.com](mailto:tcoleman@newsobserver.com).**

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