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New Hill residents get to speak out against sewer plant siting



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New Hill residents still do not want a regional wastewater plant in the middle of their community.

That was the message from more than 30 speakers at a public hearing Thursday at Apex Town Hall on a draft environmental-impact statement on the planned facility.

The hearing, before two N.C. Department of Environmental and Natural Resources staffers, was

the first forum for New Hill residents to formally speak out on the project.

Several municipal meetings and a court hearing have dealt with the project, but the hearing was the first that offered New Hill residents an opportunity to formally express opinions on the plan.

"If I built my outhouse in your back yard and took the key, you might be a little upset," said area resident Wayne Womble. "They're putting it in our front yard."

Other residents said nearby land owned by Progress Energy would be better suited for the plant and that disparities in income and racial makeup between New Hill and the partner municipalities justified not siting the plant in New Hill, based on an executive order from President Bill Clinton in 1994.

Cary, Apex, Morrisville and Holly Springs plan to build the plant in the unincorporated southwest Wake County community. The project is expected to cost more than \$230 million.

Cary and Apex have an agreement with the state from 2001 to start returning water to the Cape Fear River basin, currently discharged into the Neuse River basin, by Jan. 1, 2011. The new plant is aimed at helping comply with that agreement.

Cary, the lead agency in the project, condemned a 212-acre tract in New Hill in August over the vocal and continuing protests of area residents.

Work on plant siting has been under way for several years. Discussion of the condemnation, which started in late spring 2005, generated staunch opposition from New Hill residents who do not want the plant in their community.

The site is across Old U.S. 1 from historic New Hill Baptist Church.

New Hill residents had sued to block the plant, but the Wake County Superior Court dismissed the

suit earlier this month.

The deadline for written comments on the draft statement is June 30.

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