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New Hill residents take a stand

By [Shawn Daley](#) Editor
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The Western Wake Partners gathered an impressive lineup of local officials to deliver a litany of reasons on why building a regional sewage plant in the middle of New Hill was a good idea.

But there was little doubt that the evening belonged to those who are having the plant forced into their community n the residents of New Hill.

Shut out from the site selection process by the Cary-led partners of Apex, Holly Springs and Morrisville from the beginning, the residents finally had a proper forum to air their concerns.

More than 40 speakers, including a handful from Apex and neighboring towns, pled their case last Thursday at a public hearing held by the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

The 2 ½-hour meeting began with Apex Mayor Keith Weatherly, Wake County Manager David Cooke, Wake County Director of Environmental Services Richard Rowe, and Apex Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors Chairman Randy Clayton all speaking in glowing terms about the facility and the positive impact it will have on the area.

Even Nick Nolan, the public works director in Fayetteville, made the long drive to Apex Town Hall to make sure his comments were heard.

DENR held the hearing to gather public comment as the agency begins reviewing an environmental impact statement concerning the project. About 100 people attended the event.

Economics, growth projections, environmental factors and the need to comply with state regulations were among the reasons given by proponents for placing the sewage plant just off of old U.S. 1.

For those arguing against the site selection, the common theme was a simple one n there are better places to build the sewage plant.

"I understand growth issues," said real estate agent Colin McNair. "But (this plant) should be located away from the citizens of New Hill."

New Hill native Wayne Womble said Progress Energy took thousands of acres from New Hill

when it built the Shearon Harris Nuclear Plant in the 1980s and only used a small portion of it.

Now, he noted, the Western Wake Partners were trying to do the same thing.

"When bureaucrats see a map all they see (of New Hill) is an open, nameless place," said Womble. "If I built an outhouse in your backyard and took the key you might get upset. They want to put one in our front yard.

"Progress Energy has all that land and there is no reason it can't be used (for the sewage plant). It's time for entities to take care of their own problems and stop dumping on us."

Many residents criticized Cary for keeping the site selection process secret and for not informing New Hill residents about its plans.

"Why was it kept secret?" asked Gerald Gunter. "Cary shows contempt and disrespect to its partners.

"DENR needs to send a message that this won't be tolerated and that the government works for everyone not just rich citizens."

Lauren Forbes said the sewage plant wouldn't benefit New Hill residents because they won't be allowed to use it.

The only way a New Hill resident could use the facility is if they were annexed by Apex. Even if they were annexed it would cost about \$10,000 to connect to the system.

"They need to be annexed and Apex has no plans to annex them," said Forbes. "For all intents and purposes it has no benefit to New Hill residents."

James Clinton, pastor of First New Hill Baptist Church, challenged DENR to require the partners to find another site for the plant.

He noted that he recently attended a National History Day event with his young son and the theme was "Taking a Stand."

"Now you have the opportunity to make history," said Clinton. "I hope you will make the decision and take a stand with the little people of New Hill."

Joe Pleasant, pastor of New Hill Baptist Church, said the plant would be situated very close to his church and might even lead to its closure.

"I see a future with no church there," said Pleasant. "Would anyone want that on their hands standing before God, that it was (their) fault the church closed?"

N.C. House of Representatives candidate Ed Ridpath and Wake County Commissioner candidate Libby Brown also spoke against the planned site location.

Bob Kelly said New Hill residents realize the importance of building a regional plant but don't understand why Cary and the partners chose this site.

"No one has said the plant isn't needed," said Kelly. "We are just asking to move it one mile down the road to land already acquired by Progress Energy.

"Then we will all sit down and shut up."

DENR is accepting written comments until June 30. They can be mailed to Daniel M. Blaisdell, P.E., Assistant Chief, Engineering Branch, Construction Grants and Loans Section, North Carolina Division of Water Quality, 1633 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1633