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New Hill residents take their protest to Apex

By **BETH HATCHER, STAFF WRITER**

About 30 protesters lined Hunter Street in front of Apex Town Hall Sept. 6, taking their protest to a town they see as instrumental in helping to sway plans to place a sewer plant on 220 acres in their community.

Apex is one of four towns that have formed the Western Wake Partners — with Cary, Morrisville and Holly Springs — to build the regional facility at an estimated cost of more than \$190 million. The site chosen is across Old U.S. 1 from the historic New Hill Baptist Church.

Cary, acting on behalf of the partners, filed condemnation documents, along with a deposit of \$3.38 million, with the Wake County Clerk of Court Aug. 11. Discussion of the condemnation, which started in late spring, has generated staunch opposition from New Hill residents who do not want the plant in their community. Protesters have already hit Cary streets and took their message to Apex to keep the fight in the spotlight, said Paul Barth, president of the New Hill Community Association and a New Hill resident for 21 years.

The issue again got the spotlight later on that night at the Apex Board of Commissioners meeting when Commissioner Bill Jensen formally requested a consideration of a resolution that Western Wake Partners fully evaluate additional wastewater sites. He did not get a second.

"I knew I wasn't going to get a second. Apex has gone mute on the issue," said Jensen, who like many New Hill residents thinks the sewer plant could be sited so that it would not be near so many homes.

"Our beef with Apex is that they're just letting Cary lead the way," said Tonya Forbes, a protester who has lived in New Hill since 1998 and one of the participants at the Sept. 6 protest.

Barth said that Apex will probably be the town that will eventually annex the unincorporated New Hill area, so the town's support of siting the sewer plant somewhere else would greatly benefit the protesters' cause, he said.

Forbes has eight acres in the area that still feels rural and said she and her neighbors "would like to sit on our front porch and not smell sewage."

Honks and shouts of "I agree" from passing traffic kept the protesters company during their approximately hour-and-a-half-long permitted protest, but Forbes said that awareness is only half the battle. The real fight will likely be in court, and New Hill residents have discovered that it would cost at least \$50,000 for a serious legal challenge, she said.

So protesters plan to stay in the forefront of the discussion by continuing the protests, most likely doing another in Apex, Barth said, though they have not decided whether they will visit Morrisville and Holly Springs.

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