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New Hill residents file legal action against proposed sewage plant

by Shawn Daley
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New Hill residents have threatened to take legal action against the Western Wake Partners for quite awhile. Now, that threat has become action.

The Southern Coalition for Social Justice filed a petition Sept. 9 challenging the location of the Partners' proposed regional sewage plant.

Filed with the Office of Administrative Hearings on behalf of the New Hill Community Association, the petition

contests a water quality certification issued by the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources to the Partners.

The petitioners believe information supplied by the Partners was deficient in showing the many impacts on surrounding residents.

The Partners – a group of towns that include Cary, Apex, Morrisville and Holly Springs – plan to build the \$350 million facility in the heart of the New Hill Community. Apex's share in the cost of the plant is about \$85 million, a number that could rise over time for a variety of reason.

“As we have stated throughout this process, there are better places (to build) this sewage plant,” said SCSJ Attorney Chris Brook. “We are confident that we can make our case to a third-part review.” Brooks said the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers relied too heavily on information supplied by the Partners when it gave its final approval on the project last month.

“Alternative sites were not adequately considered,” said Brook. “It will certainly have a negative impact on the New Hill community as well as the Western Wake Partners communities.”

According to Brook, other sites would have lowered the expense of the project as well as limiting the detrimental effects on New Hill residents.

Items specifically addressed in the petition include:

The chosen location (Site 14) has larger human and environmental impacts than alternative locations, including nearby Progress Energy land that has already been condemned.

An increase in noise, odor, traffic and lights will impact the New Hill Historic

District, including the predominantly African-American First Baptist Church.

The Partners “reverse-engineered” the location by committing nearly \$10 million to the site before studying its human and environmental impacts. This prohibited unbiased consideration of alternative sites.

“There are better places to put this plant,” said Elaine Joyner, a member of First Baptist Church New Hill, in a written statement. “We understand the Partners’ needs for additional sewage capacity. We simply ask that they do not put the burdens of their growth in the middle of our community, next to our churches.”

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