

Apex Herald, The (NC)

April 23, 2009

Still raising a stink

SHAWN DALEY EDITOR

For the past few years residents in New Hill have been repeatedly asking the same question - why are neighboring towns so adamant about building a **sewage** plant in the middle of their community? Speaking at last week's public hearing at Apex town hall, longtime New Hill resident Louis Powell said he knows the answer.

"When I get up in the morning and look at myself in the mirror I know why," said Powell, who is African-American. "We don't have the political clout to fight you. We don't have the money to fight you.

"Well, you are going to be surprised. We won't go easily.

I predict we won't go at all until we win." Powell was one of more than 40 people to speak at the three-hour hearing. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers held the event as a way to collect public comments for the project's Environmental Impact Statement.

The towns of Cary, Apex, Holly Springs and Morrisville plan to build the regional **sewage** plant in the center of New Hill.

The towns need the extra **sewage** capacity to ensure continual growth and development.

Those who oppose the project said they understood the need for the plant but don't understand why it couldn't be built farther away from the center of the community.

"The logical choice is Progress Energy land," said New Hill resident Ann King.

"It would be less expensive and have less impact on people." Many of the speakers also said they were concerned that so many minorities live near the proposed site.

New Hill resident Edna Horton noted that there is an 83 percent minority population within a half-mile radius of the site.

"Most of the minority residents do not favor the project," said Horton.

"You have overwhelmingly white communities attempting to build (the plant) in a minority community," said New Hill Community Association President Paul Barth. "Other options are available." Other New Hill residents voiced their concerns about **sewage** spills, odor, noise, tainted well water, light pollution, traffic, and shrinking property values.

Some also worried about the affects the plant would have on the nearby historic district.

"What recourse do residents have in case of spills or noise?" said Thelma Gardner, who lives next to the proposed site.

"I'm concerned about accountability from Apex and Cary." Dr. Susan Bristol noted that Cary has a "terrible history" with **sewage** spills. She was certainly not the only New Hill resident concerned about Cary's past problems with spills.

"I'm concerned about raw **sewage** being pumped 17 miles," said Carolyn Sink.

"The question is not 'if' but 'when' there will be a spill.

Who is going to clean it up? It's our problem because no one else will assume responsibility." Not all the speakers opposed the project. Apex Mayor Keith Weatherly, Cary Mayor Harold Weinbrecht and Holly Springs Mayor Dick Sears all spoke in favor of the **sewage** plant. Morrisville Mayor Jan Faulkner also voiced her support in a letter that was read aloud.

Weatherly said the chosen site was the "most cost effective and environmentally sound" site. He also said there was a "critical need" for the plant.

"It will allow for quality, economic development and bring jobs into the area," said Weatherly.

Saying he was "personally committed to environmental protection," Weinbrecht then voiced his support for the site.

"It is critical to the public health and economic well being of the area," said Weinbrecht. "It is well conceived, well planned and well suited for the region. It should move forward without delay." Sears called the project an "excellent demonstration of municipal cooperation." Elizabeth Rooks of the Research Triangle Foundation also added her support. She noted that "growth can only occur with adequate wastewater capacity." Officials from Wake County and the City of Fayetteville also spoke in favor of the project.

Written comments are being accepted until April 28 and can be e-mailed to henry.m.wicker.jr@usace.army.mil.

For more information about the project visit www.westernwakepartners.com or www.newhillca.org.

www.westernwakepartners.com or www.newhillca.org.

Copyright, 2009, Apex Herald, The (NC) Heartland Publications, LLC All Rights Reserved.