

SOUNDED GOOD AT THE TIME...

By A.C. Cargill

Hard lessons in politics

Recently, a young Apexian was lauded for being appointed to the Apex Parks, Recreation and Culture Resources Department Advisory Commission. At 19, Scott Lassiter, son of Town Council candidate Ann Lassiter, is getting a real lesson in local politics. Sounds good, but...

Another such lesson in politics is playing out in New Hill. In one of the best examples of tenacity I have ever witnessed, New Hill residents aren't "going with the flow" (pun intended) of the Western Wake Partners' plan to plop a wastewater treatment facility in their midst. From the beginning, residents have pointed out to everyone how unjust this is to their community. (A lesson to definitely "untenacious" Town Council members who have now done a complete reversal on their opinions of the mishmash design for the taxdollar-funded Cultural Arts Center when project backers objected.)

The latest salvo is from Guy Meilleur, of the New Hill Community Association, in his letter to three state officials (Dan Blaisdell, Cyndi Karoly, and Monte Matthews), appealing to keep New Hill's environment free of waste from Cary, Apex, Holly Springs, and Morrisville. It's also a plea to be able to maintain the quality of life so dear to us all.

Some key events in this David-vs.-Goliath struggle:

■ May 2002 to July 2004 - Western Wake Partners "evaluate options for providing long-term wastewater management services for western Wake County."

■ May 2005 - In an extremely light turnout (only 6.4 percent of Cary voters bothered), the clean water bond passed (by 78 percent of 6.4 percent - fewer than 5 voters out of 100), providing funds for the facility. (Majority rule by a very tiny minority?)

■ Sometime later - New Hill is selected as the dumpee in letters signed by the mayors of Apex, Holly Springs and Morrisville, without telling anyone in New Hill.

■ May 31, 2005 - New Hill holds a town meeting after the information "leaks" to them about the facility.

■ June 14, 2005 - Cary hastily puts together a public information meeting, since the cat (or should I say "poo"?) is now out of the bag.

■ After that - Letters to local newspapers start flying out of New Hill, all with the same theme. "Why us?"

■ December 2005 - Unfortunately, the wheels of government continued to grind unhampered, as the Western Wake Partners hired Arcadis to "spearhead the design."

■ February 2006 - New Hill files suit to stop the facility being built in their midst. (Alas, they lost the first round, but they're not done fighting yet.)

As a side note, a real estate agent I know (who doesn't want to be on the record) told me in May that while showing property in New Hill she saw all the "Stop Cary" signs. She said her clients were reluctant to buy in the area and be next door to a wastewater facility. In light of the spillage at Lake Crabtree last year (pointed out by Meilleur in his letter) and the Swift Creek spillage that took place during heavy rains last month, I don't blame them.

New Hill residents: Keep up the fight!

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