

New Hill residents voice concerns

Door-to-door visits being planned by WWP consultants draws criticism

By SHAWN DALEY

EDITOR

The Western Wake Partners all but ignored the residents of New Hill when deciding to build a regional sewage plant in the middle of their community.

Now, the Partners are about to get an up close look at the people their decision will effect the most.

Consultant Tommy Esqueda told the Apex Town Council on Nov. 7 that the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources is requesting the Partners to allow more public input in the process.

Over the next five to six weeks, consultants will go door-to-door in the area targeted for the sewage plant.

"We will knock on doors of people adjacent to the site to try and understand their thoughts and issues with this project," said Esqueda.

Councilman Bill Jensen said he would prefer if the Partners hold larger community meetings for the residents.

Esqueda explained that consultants have said gathering data would be the first priority.

"The plan now is for one-on-one meetings," said Esqueda. "Later, we will go back with some common themes and have broader meetings."

Besides collecting input from the public, DENR also told the Partners that additional data was needed for the Environmental Justice report and the site selection process.

The Partners - Cary, Apex, Holly Springs and Morrisville - plan to build the regional plant just off of old U.S. 1 in the middle of the New Hill community.

Several New Hill residents addressed the council about their concerns over the project. Most told the town leaders that the community is eager to become partners in the process.

Tonya Forbes worried that the door-to-door meeting with residents was a poor way to gather public input.

"It is designed to isolate residents," said Forbes. "It is not in the spirit of community input that residents and DENR are requesting."

Voice: Residents hope for more involvement

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Carolyn Sink pointed out that Apex residents recently had a negative experience with an unwanted presence in their town.

She hoped the EQ fire would allow Apex leaders to empathize more with their plight.

"I hope you've gained a deeper compassion and heightened awareness," said Sink.

She noted that Cary has a long history of sewage spills and that could cause serious problems in a rural area that

relies on well water.

"This won't mean a temporary stay in a hotel for us," said Sink. "This will be permanent."

David Bristol said the door-to-door visits should also include all the people who attend the two churches adjacent to the site and who visit the nearby nursing home.

"Gathering public input seems disingenuous after the land has already been condemned and paid for," said Bristol.