

Proposed landfill dealt a blow; residents vent

by L. Reidar Jensen

With more than 50 angry Centre County residents watching, the Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) voted unanimously to strike down plans for a proposed I-80 interchange in Centre County Tuesday night, dealing a blow to plans for a proposed landfill and incinerator in Rush Township.

Resource Recovery LLC, the company proposing the landfill, wanted its own exit off of Interstate 80. Plans submitted by the developer estimate over 850 garbage trucks would enter the dump daily, bringing waste from out of state.

The prospect of a massive landfill in the midst of the remote forests of central Pennsylvania has angered many local residents. On Tuesday night, they made sure they were heard.

The audience was unconditionally against the proposed landfill. Over 20 made impassioned pleas for the MPO to "do the right thing" by denying Resource Recovery easy access to its proposed site in the hopes that plans for the dump would be scrapped as a result.

JoAnn Gillette, a Snow Shoe Township resident and Moshannon Forest seasonal property owner, said the proposed landfill would lower her property's value and damage it aesthetically.

"We built our camp not only to have a woodsy, peaceful environment to relax at, but also to have a camp to pass down to our children, which they, in turn, could pass down to theirs," she said.

"To know that there could now be a landfill and an incinerator a few miles down the road taints the pleasure of owning this forest property," Gillette said.

Homeowners in the area now have more than just the landfill to worry about. Resource Recovery threatened last week to use local roads (Gorton Road and state

routes 144 and 53) to access its site if an Interstate 80 interchange was not approved.

Steven Lachman, State College resident and attorney pro bono for People Protecting Communities, a local community group involved in fighting the landfill, said without an I-80 interchange the chances of Resource Recovery getting permission to use local roadways is slim to none.

Resource Recovery would need permission from PennDOT and the Department of Environmental Protection - permissions Lachman said would be tough to obtain. But even if PennDOT and the DEP signed off, he said, Snow Shoe Township holds the last card.

"Even if they get permission, Resource Recovery still needs to do something to those roads to make them suitable for the trucks, and last I checked, Resource Recovery doesn't have eminent domain power in Snow Shoe Township. They're out of here," he exclaimed. "But that depends on [the MPO] to make the right decision tonight!"

Still, residents at the meeting voiced their displeasure over the fact that the daily use of local roads by hundreds of garbage trucks was even a possibility.

Gillette cited a May 2005 presentation made by Resource Recovery to the DEP in which they said the I-80 interchange was key, because it would "substantially reduce road safety risks locally and regionally, and avoid local traffic burdens and the public safety risks and nuisances that such traffic can cause," stated Gillette.

"By their own admission," she continued, "using local roads will pose traffic burdens, safety risks and nuisances. For Resource Recovery to now threaten the use of our local roads runs counter to their sales pitch to the DEP."

Dan Mottin, a resident of Moshannon who recently built his "dream home" along



Photo by L. Reidar Jensen

Steven Lachman, an attorney for People Protecting Communities, as he spoke Tuesday.

Gorton Road, said he doesn't want to leave his home.

"I live here. I love it here. For obvious reasons. Me, my Dad and my brothers every year go hunting and fishing on the ground that's going to be affected. I don't want that to end. I don't want to move somewhere else," Mottin said.

"When I give people directions to my house," Mottin continued, "I don't want to say 'Go by the biggest landfill east of the Mississippi and take a turn and you'll be at my house.' I don't want that!"

Residents left the meeting satisfied, knowing that the chances of Resource Recovery's proposed landfill ever coming to fruition were severely damaged.

When Centre County Commissioner Chris Exarchos warned the crowd that this might not be the end, that Resource Recovery might still try to get permission to use local roads, audience members shouted out, "We'll fight that too," and "One step at a time!"

Certainly for the many Centre County residents who oppose the landfill, Tuesday's meeting was a big step in the right direction.

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the concluding section of the paper, there is no positive account of 'intelligent design' presented."

The State College school board not only voted on science textbooks in June, they also recognized one of their most successful competitive student organizations. Not football. Not track. Not marching band.

This past year's Knowledge Masters team won the Pennsylvania state championship and then went on to the national competition, where they placed second. Many of these same students participated in the Department of Energy's Science Bowl in which State College excelled, scoring third place in King of the Hill and first place overall and winning a total of \$2,250.

Julie Gittings, who advises the Knowledge Masters, believes that "ID is a faith-based construct." Reflecting on her students' ability to deal with the possible complications for students learning ID and evolution, she wrote, "Frankly, most of the highly able students who achieve well in the sciences are objective, methodical, talented thinkers who examine ideas critically and fairly ... some of them also are religious ... some believe in a Divine Creator. They do not confuse these issues of faith in God and a religious set of values with their work in physics, chemistry, biology, genetics, geology or any other field." She continued, "They keep their sense of wonder and faith - while searching for TRUTH."

Gittings' remarks do not reflect an official position by the school district.

The curriculum remains the same no matter House Bill 1007. State College students' biology textbook for the foreseeable future is an updated edition of the book the district has been using, *Biology: Exploring Life*. It includes a chapter on evolution.

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