

Brunswick Moves Ahead With Power-Generating Waste Disposal

BY ERIC CARLSON

The Brunswick County Board of Commissioners on Tuesday seized an opportunity to avoid a long, ugly battle over building a new landfill by authorizing contract talks aimed at joining three other area counties in a regional power-generating garbage disposal system.

Acting County Manager Charles McGinnis and County Engineer Robert Tucker were instructed to begin negotiations with the Vedco Energy Corp., a Houston, Texas, based firm that is currently building a waste-to-energy disposal system outside Fayetteville.

If a contract is signed, Brunswick would join Bladen, Cumberland and Hoke counties in their "BCH Energy Project," which is designed to remove plastics, aluminum and other metals from garbage while using the

combustible materials to generate electricity.

Vedco has arranged to sell the electric power produced at the facility to a nearby DuPont Co. plant. Company officials estimate that only about 10 percent of the incoming solid waste will have to be buried in Cumberland County's landfill.

Brunswick County is running out of landfill space and must find a new place to dispose of its garbage by 1998. Under new state and federal regulations, the county also will be required to devise a plan to reduce its total landfill input by 25 percent through recycling.

The necessary cut in buried waste will increase to 40 percent in the year 2002.

Efforts to locate a site for a new county landfill faltered after public protests were raised over proposed

dump sites in the Leland and Boiuvia areas.

At a meeting in May, Tucker presented the commissioners with a comparison study of three solid waste disposal alternatives. The least expensive choice would be to locate and construct a suitable landfill site within the county, he said.

The next cheapest method might be to dispose of the county's garbage at a regional landfill such as the one proposed for Columbus County. But officials there are having the same difficulty finding a politically acceptable dump site.

The third, and probably most expensive alternative would be to join in Vedco's BCH Energy Project, which Tucker said "would get Brunswick County out of the landfill business." Although Vedco would haul county's garbage to Cumberland County, Brunswick would

have to join in the construction of a solid waste transfer station at the existing landfill.

Tucker has estimated that in-county waste disposal would cost about \$38 per ton for the first year and \$48 after 10 years. He said that paying Vedco for the service would cost approximately \$44 a ton the first year, climbing to more than \$62 a ton after a 10 years.

However, because the county will have to meet stricter waste-reduction standards, Tucker said the Vedco option might save money in long-term recycling costs. Company officials last May suggested that Tucker might be a bit optimistic in his cost estimates for a new county landfill.

At Tuesday's meeting, McGinnis and Tucker let Vedco officials know that they have a few concerns about the company's preliminary contract offer. McGinnis said the county will

want to have the option of reviewing Vedco's performance "at least" three times during the proposed 25-year contract period.

Tucker also questioned Vedco's proposal to offer the county a refund of only \$20 a ton if it finds itself unable to recycle as much waste as the contract anticipates.

"If they don't make it (Vedco's recycling quota), they will pay us \$20 a ton to take it back while we will have to pay \$100 a ton to recycle it somewhere else," Tucker said. "They'll need sweeten the pot a little if they want to show me how confident they are in their ability to recycle that much waste."

Commissioner Don Warren said he liked what he has seen so far of the Vedco proposal, calling it "the most viable alternative of the options available right now." He noted that Columbus County had become "bogged down" in their regional landfill planing and said "our citizens don't want a landfill here."

Warren said he was also attracted to the power-generating waste disposal idea because it would "help us meet our recycling goals." However, he supported the idea of requiring a regular performance review of the operation.

The vote to approve negotiations with Vedco was unanimous.

In other business the board:

■ Adopted a "central permitting

ordinance" as the first step toward implementing a long talked-about "one-stop shopping" system for obtaining the numerous clearances from county agencies required before building a home or business. The system would link the various permitting offices by computer, allowing applicants to receive necessary approvals through a central permitting system instead of having to visit the county health department, building inspections, planning, zoning, land records and geographic information systems (GIS) for individual permits.

■ Passed a resolution urging the county Alcoholic Beverage Control Board to reconsider its plan to open a new liquor store in the Ash area. Commissioner Jerry Jones asked for the vote, saying the county already has enough ABC outlets. He said a new county store would hurt sales at the Shallotte ABC store, which saw a major reduction in business after the county opened a liquor store outside Holden Beach.

■ Approved travel expenses for parks and recreation department employee Tina Pritchard to attend a National Association of Counties workshop in Las Vegas, Nev., where she will be presented with the organization's annual achievement award for her supervision of the local volunteer "Turtle Watch" program.



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

Taking To The Streets

Leading the long line of parade participants, the Brunswick County Schools 4th of July Festival Band makes its way up Howe Street in Southport Monday morning.

Coast Guard Charges Two With Boating While Impaired

The U.S. Coast Guard Station at Oak Island prosecuted two boating-while-intoxicated cases, according to a report from Chief J.D. Arndt.

"It is against federal regulations to operate a vessel while under the influence," Arndt said. "The legal limit is .08 blood alcohol content, just like the regulations for the State of North Carolina for driving a car."

If convicted, the boaters face maximum fines of \$1,000 each.

On Sunday morning, July 2, the Coast Guard station's 41-footer, while on patrol, came upon a disabled 19-foot vessel in the vicinity of Marker 5 in the Atlantic Intra-coastal Waterway. Because a storm was approaching, the 41-footer towed the vessel to a safe haven without issuing a Marine Assistance

Radio Broadcast (MARB) to call for a commercial salvor.

At 11 a.m. Sunday, the station received a call from a 35-foot vessel disabled about five miles north of Frying Pan Light. Because the situation was not an emergency, a MARB was issued. However there was no response, so the station's 41-footer was again launched.

While the Coast Guard vessel was en route, the station received a call from a commercial salvor who said he could reach the scene in three hours. The Coast Guard vessel remained on the scene until the salvor arrived and completed arrangements to tow the vessel to safety.

The station also prosecuted three other MARB cases during the holiday weekend.

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