

WASTE
FROM PAGE I

“I do not think Orange County should have made the long-ago decision to have a waste transfer station,” she wrote, “but it is too late now to start a landfill search for our immediate needs (2009 and beyond).”

“We’re basically out of time,” says Commissioner Alice Gordon. “Even finding a site for a transfer station before the landfill fills up is going to be a challenge.” She says she sees no alternative at present to a transfer station.

Lavelle suggests a stepped approach.

“[W]hile the county commissioners are searching for another site for the transfer station (or soon thereafter),” she says, “it might make sense for them to start searching for a site for a new landfill, because the transfer station is a short-term solution to this problem. If another location for a landfill is identified now, neighbors that surround that location will have many years notice that it is coming. Perhaps the commissioners could work out an arrangement for a regional landfill with neighboring counties.”

As have other elected officials, Lavelle suggests that operating a transfer station is environmentally unfriendly, given the fuel expended in transport, and increasingly expensive, given the rising cost of that fuel.

Lavelle further believes it’s irresponsible: “We should take care of our own trash.”

Most agree that taking care of our own waste is the ideal scenario. But, says County Commissioner Moses Carey, “We’ve got a comprehensive solid waste management plan that’s approved by all the partners who use the landfill. Until that comprehensive plan changes, we need to pursue [the transfer station] option.”

Rewriting the comprehensive plan would be, says Carey, “a decision that will be made by everyone, not just the county commissioners. The county commissioners are the managers; that means we’re implementing the comprehensive plan that’s been approved by everyone else.”

“Any ideas, any assistance — properties, anything — we’ll welcome whatever we can get.”

Anywhere but Eubanks

Regardless, says Gist, the transfer station “doesn’t belong on Eubanks Road.” For 35 years, the Rogers-Eubanks community has been home to the Orange County Landfill. This past March that community, led by the Rogers-Eubanks Coalition to End

Environmental Racism, successfully lobbied the board of commissioners to reconsider its decision to locate the transfer station on Eubanks Road – citing environmental justice considerations – though Eubanks does remain under consideration as a potential site.

Lavelle agrees with Gist, saying the Eubanks Road community has “done its share for our community with regard to trash. Even though a transfer station is a different animal than a landfill, it still brings with it large garbage trucks and increased traffic, conditions the neighbors of the current landfill have lived with for many years. Other locations should be seriously and thoroughly considered for the transfer station rather than the Eubanks Road site.”

Gordon says that whether Eubanks should continue to be considered is a decision that should be made before getting too far into the search process, and that she expected the commission to discuss it at its Jan. 16 work session (see below). “There should be an environmental justice component [to the search criteria],” she says. “That should weigh heavily on our decision.”

Investing in reduction

So how do we move forward toward more environmentally sound waste-disposal practices and policies?

It should first be noted that, relatively speaking, we do pretty well here in Orange County.

According to Blair Pollock, a planner with the Orange County Solid Waste Management Department, the state will soon announce that the county has achieved a 47.7 percent waste-reduction rate for fiscal year 2006-07. Pollack says this figure is expressed in terms of waste reduction per capita compared to a 1991-92 benchmark. He says that Orange County consistently has among the best waste-reduction rates in the state.

“Orange County is one of the leaders in the state in terms of reducing volume and recycling,” says Carey. “Our reduction efforts have been successful because elected officials have promoted it and we’ve put ordinances in place that require merchants and others to take stuff out of the stream and do something other than put it in the landfill.”

Curbside recycling has been a big success, he says: “Curbside recycling is real important and we’ve invested a lot of money in that; that’s not cheap. But that has helped us achieve some of our goals of reducing the volume and taken stuff out of the stream. It’s also extended the life of our landfill beyond what we were originally

led to believe, by quite a bit. We feel that’s been very successful.”

Our county ordinances have, in fact, brought very favorable returns — the 3R fee (Waste Reduction, Reuse and Recycling), for example, by which improved properties in Orange County are charged for some of the recycling services offered by the county. And our Commercial Glass Recycling Program, which, according to the county’s website, diverts about 40 tons of glass, metal and plastic per month from the landfill.

The county conducts several recovery programs at the landfill, including clean wood and scrap metal.

Nelson believes, however, that we could go further still in what we might ban from a landfill.

“I have raised the idea of banning items from our landfill that are currently collected for recycling in Orange County,” he explains. “These would include things like glass and plastic bottles, newspapers, magazines, etc. Orange has the highest recycling rates of any county in the state. But even with our success, we are still landfilling too much waste that could be recycled.”

On the individual level, says Gist, “It all gets down to: we’ve got to stop producing so much garbage,” citing in particular excessive packaging from grocery store and fast-food restaurant purchases. She also points out that when you buy a tire, you get taxed for its disposal. She believes there should be more items for which that’s true.

“Our community has so many environmentally conscious citizens that I am certain the collective ‘we’ will continue to work on this issue,” Lavelle says. “I believe public education campaigns are a huge component of this, starting with our children and continuing with the students that come here for their college years.”

“We need to shore up our already successful recycling program so that it is in place and accessible for everyone, at home and at work. We need to educate about composting, and the need for everyone to reduce, reuse and recycle.”

Time to look anew

“We still have a lot of work to do,” says Carey.

He recalls, back in the early ‘90s, “a collective look by folks from Chapel Hill and Durham at alternatives to landfilling.

“We looked at incineration and determined that the risks associated with pollution that affected people’s lives were greater than we wanted to experience. ...

“We also looked at trying to regionalize an option because the cost of getting any

of the alternatives was so great — the upfront costs, construction and implementation. And we looked at getting multiple jurisdictions to participate, and it was still very expensive.

But, he says, “It probably is time to take another look at those alternatives to landfilling, because technology has changed in 15 years. We just haven’t done it.”

Gordon agrees. It’s time again, she says, to look into “environmentally friendly alternatives.”

In the meantime, Gist says, “Ideally we [would] have one or two smaller sites and do everything possible to reduce everything we can’t eliminate.”

She believes that a county landfill should be placed in the southern part of the county, where the majority of our waste is being generated.

But she recognizes that there’s no ideal site — no place that wouldn’t raise objections.

On an ongoing basis

As Omega Wilson of Mebane’s West End Revitalization Association reminds us, the shaping of public policy is a participatory sport.

You elect officials in the hope that they will pursue your best interests. But you don’t then just turn away.

“When you send your kid to school,” Wilson says, “you don’t say to the principal and teachers, ‘Well, just take care of them. I’m not going to PTA. I’m not worrying about their lunch money.’”

“You’ve got to think about protecting your community and infrastructure the same way. It’s something you have to monitor on an ongoing basis.”

“Philosophically speaking,” says Alice Gordon, “we should be handling our own waste.

“But what does that mean?” she asks. If it stays in the community, in *whose* backyard? And can we see past tomorrow, next year, the next generation?

As we’ve explored throughout this series, the democratic process works when folks refuse to allow policy to go unquestioned. Charges of environmental injustice were leveled in Orange County. Our county commissioners listened. Whether the Rogers-Eubanks community will be asked to continue to house a waste facility will probably soon be determined. Beyond that decision, questions are being raised about how we can, and must, act as a community in dealing with our solid waste.

We’re generating the waste collectively, and only collectively will we find the right solutions. There are no “really feel-good” answers — tough ones only, and critical.



Rooster spurs neighborhood complaints

A Pine Street rooster is too noisy to live in town, a nearby neighbor told the Carrboro Board of Aldermen.

At Tuesday’s meeting at Town Hall, Susan Simone, who lives on North Greensboro Street petitioned the board of aldermen, asking for an amendment to town ordinances.

“I’m presenting this because I’ve been having a two-month rooster discussion with someone,” she said.

Jacquie Gist said she was concerned that some residents who are “sort of growing their own” might be concerned that their efforts to raise eggs would shut down.

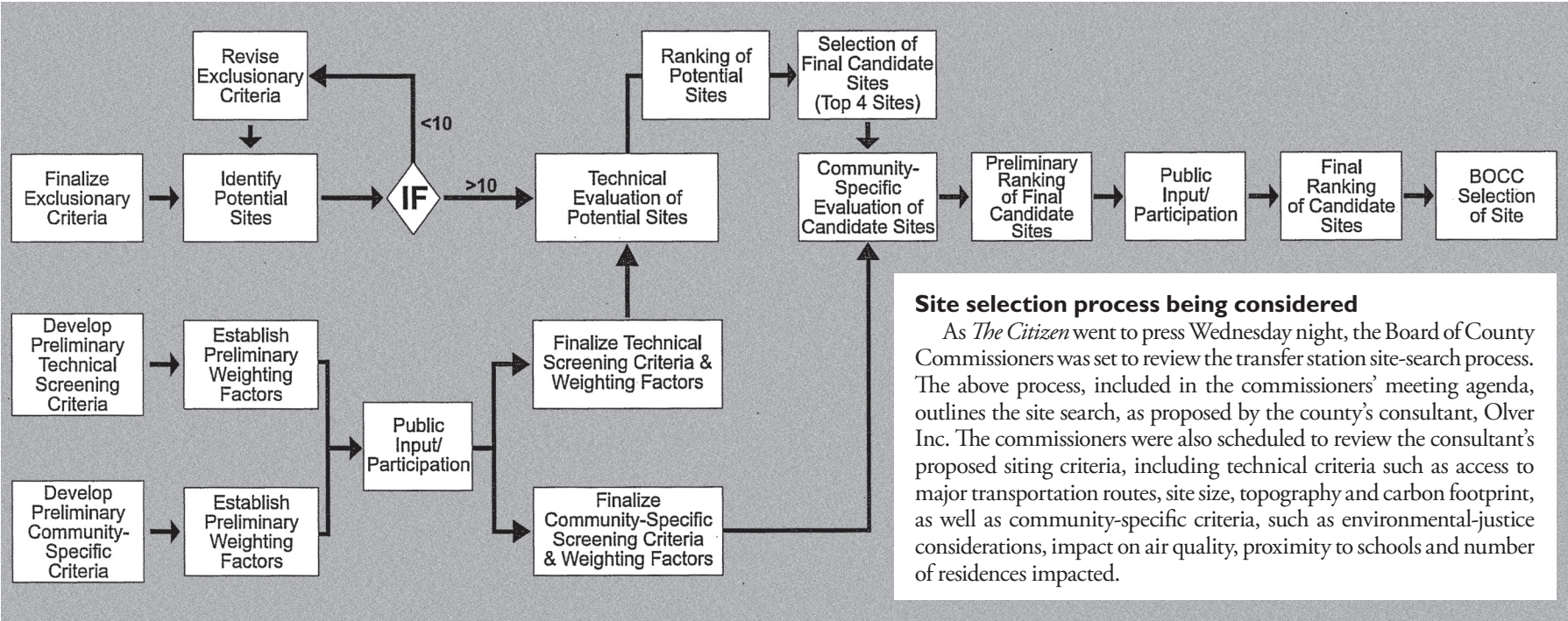
Simone said she’s researched the subject and that the rule would only apply to loud roosters and that hens can be productive without the aid of a loud male around.

Simone suggested that the town adopt wording similar to a Chapel Hill ordinance on “noisy foul,” which reads: “It shall be unlawful for any person to keep or maintain on any premises or lot within the town any rooster, duck, goose or other such bird or fowl that by loud and habitual crowing, quacking or honking or in any other manner constitutes a public nuisance. Failure to abate such nuisance within two days after written notice from the Town Manager shall be unlawful.”

Asked by Alderman Dan Coleman how annoying the rooster in question is, Simone said that the crowing recently started at 3:41 a.m. and lasted until past 7 a.m.

The board voted to refer the issue to the town’s staff for review. Coleman asked Town Manager Steve Stewart that the matter be handled expeditiously.

—from Staff Reports



Site selection process being considered

As *The Citizen* went to press Wednesday night, the Board of County Commissioners was set to review the transfer station site-search process. The above process, included in the commissioners’ meeting agenda, outlines the site search, as proposed by the county’s consultant, Olver Inc. The commissioners were also scheduled to review the consultant’s proposed siting criteria, including technical criteria such as access to major transportation routes, site size, topography and carbon footprint, as well as community-specific criteria, such as environmental-justice considerations, impact on air quality, proximity to schools and number of residences impacted.



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There will be
NO CHANGE IN RECYCLING SERVICE
for Martin Luther King Jr. Day



Curbside recycling will be collected
Monday, January 21 **as scheduled**.
Please have your bin out by 7:00am.

The Orange County Landfill will be open
normal hours 7:00am-4:00pm.

Solid Waste Convenience Centers will
be **CLOSED** January 21 and will resume
normal hours on January 22.

The Solid Waste Management
Administration Office will be **CLOSED**
January 21 and will resume normal
hours on January 22.



Orange County Solid Waste Management
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