

Joining consortium an option for Hills

By Joanno Maliszewski
staff writer

Participating in the Oakland County solid waste disposal plan is an alternative for Farmington Hills and nearby communities faced with increasing refuse disposal costs.

"Farmington Hills and other communities in the consortium are concerned about the costs of it," said Thomas Blaisell, Farmington Hills public services director.

Still, the county's plan for an incinerator and waste energy recovery plant, landfill and recycling system is an alternative for the six community members in a consortium formed in July.

The consortium, which includes Farmington Hills and Farmington, has hired the Kansas City-based consulting firm, Black & Veatch, to study what the cities can do to stem disposal costs, Blaisell said. Other members are Southfield, Novi, Walled Lake and South Lyon.

The Farmington Hills City Council this year allocated \$24,000 for the Solid Waste Consortium to help pay for consultants and studies. The consortium will serve as an advisory group, compiling necessary information and alternatives that will be provided to the individual city councils for consideration. Study of the Oakland County plan also will be included.

"THE CONSORTIUM is going to look at trash generation and what's best for the communities. We will start crystal-balling five to 10 years from now what the costs of refuse disposal should be," Blaisell said.

George Schutte, Oakland County chief engineer working on the solid waste plan, said the six-city consortium "is entitled" to study possible alternatives. But planning for the 30 communities that are committed to participating in the county plan must continue.

"Our intent is to do the best we can with the communities who are ready to proceed," Schutte said.

County officials are updating the

solid waste plan adopted in 1983 as approved by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and required by Michigan Public Act 641 of 1978.

State law requires a five-year update. But state officials have extended that requirement to January 1989 so more coordination is possible between solid waste plans for all Michigan counties. "Our target is to have a draft of the updated plan by March 1989," Schutte said.

That plan is expected to cover the needed facilities for solid waste disposal as well as estimated costs, Schutte said. But the county is faced with determining what size of plant to build, based on the participating communities, Blaisell said.

"YOU CAN'T build one of these facilities so huge to accommodate future communities wanting to come in," Schutte said.

The first facility, however, perhaps could be built with expansion in mind should other communities decide to participate.

The 30 communities that are committed to the county solid waste plan could opt to receive paybacks from communities who built the plant later. That would not be inappropriate considering the 30 communities are taking the initial risks, Schutte said.

He acknowledged consortium members' concerns about the costs of participating in the county plan. But the chief engineer also questions the life of the landfills the communities are now using. "There's only about four to five years left in the Oakland County landfills," Schutte said.

Though costs are only estimates, Farmington Hills, for example, could be faced with paying anywhere from \$22 to \$50 a ton for solid waste disposal. "We're figuring with the increases (charged by the Browning-Ferris Industries landfill in Washtenaw County) that we are paying now about \$10.50 a ton for disposal. That doesn't include collection," said Dale Countegan, Farm-

ington Hills assistant to the public services director.

BFT'S LANDFILL in Washtenaw County is considered to have the most available space in the state, Blaisell said. It's also much closer (consequently less expensive because of hauling fees based on mileage) to

Farmington Hills than the planned facility at the Oakland County complex in Pontiac, he added.

"We've been given one alternative by the county. The result could be that the best alternative would be to join the county," Blaisell said. "They (county officials) would love to see us in the county plan. But we don't want to commit to anything long-

term without knowledge. So the decisions we're looking at are lasting and very expensive."

The Oakland County plan calls for building a solid waste incinerator and a sanitary landfill. The incinerator would burn waste and generate steam and electricity. The steam probably would be used by the county and the electricity would be sold

to the utility companies, Schutte said.

The landfill would accommodate ashes from the incinerator and other waste materials that can't be burned. A recycling system for newspapers and glass, for example, also will be considered. "We could reduce the waste stream by pulling items out of it," Schutte said.

Wrestling with disposal of solid waste

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crease followed in August. Since then, BFI increased prices 20 percent in April 1987 and 14 percent Oct. 1. That's a 34 percent increase this year, Countegan said.

The Farmington Hills City Council amended the 1987-88 refuse removal budget more than \$67,000, a 5 percent budget increase, to cover the October disposal increases.

The increased landfill costs are passed to the city through the Farmington-based Rubbish Co., which provides Farmington Hills with collec-

tion and disposal services.

In November 1986, Farmington Hills officials renewed and extended through 1990 the city's contract with the Rubbish Co. for collecting garbage. The contract provides a 3 percent increase each year through the end of the decade. On top of those costs, the Rubbish Co. passes to the city what the landfill charges the company for disposing of the city's residential garbage, Countegan said.

THIS YEAR the city is paying the Rubbish Co. \$4.37 per household

monthly to collect garbage. BFI charges \$1.86 on the same basis. For the almost 17,000 households in Farmington Hills, the city pays a total \$6.23 per household per month for garbage collection and disposal, Countegan said.

While collection still represents the greatest portion of disposal costs for the city, landfill fees are gaining. "Now it's shifting. You have a shift from your collection costs to dumping," Countegan said. "It's not going to be so unlikely that this will be a trend."

This year, the landfill tipping fees represent 30 percent of the total costs. Last year, however, the fees represented 27 percent, Countegan said.

"We have no contractual relationship with the landfill," he said. "Our attitude is, it's up to the Rubbish Co. to find the most cost-effective landfill."

"We examined what other communities — Southfield, Novi, Royal Oak — are paying. We found what we are getting under our contract with the Rubbish Co. is competitive."

Farmington road projects almost done

Continued from Page 1

way fund money, according to earlier reports from Deadman.

During the summer, Farmington Road was completely reconstructed from Shilawsee to 10 Mile. Two legs of Power from Grand River to 10 Mile received improvements including bridge improvements; and four sections of Shilawsee from Farmington Road to Orchard Lake were repaved with special attention given to the road base in front of Farmington High School.

Also during the summer, an Oak-

land County project in conjunction with Farmington and Farmington Hills improved 10 Mile Road at the cities' border.

THE WATER improvement project affects 356 households and is designed to add 20-25 pounds per cubic foot of pressure, or more, to their water output, Deadman said.

The project involves an area from Oakwood Cemetery on Grand River east on Shilawsee where a new water line was added. It took longer than planned because of unexpected,

unused, 50-year-old utility lines and other items discovered underground when the contractor was digging to install new line and line taps.

Residents experienced several daytime water shutoffs during the summer to facilitate the contractor in doing the project, Deadman added.

The project is not to increase the current system, but to isolate the residents having the problem and add them to a new high pressure system.

"It's really to do a better job of

serving the current system," Deadman added. "People were suffering from relatively low water pressure, especially in the summer."

Future projects include Downtown Development Authority renovations and improvements to the downtown area, and possibly a widening of Nine Mile Road both east and west of Farmington Road, if approved.

The long-awaited widening of Orchard Lake Road is under way, but Deadman said some federal funding for the project has slowed plans. He estimates construction will not begin until at least 1990.

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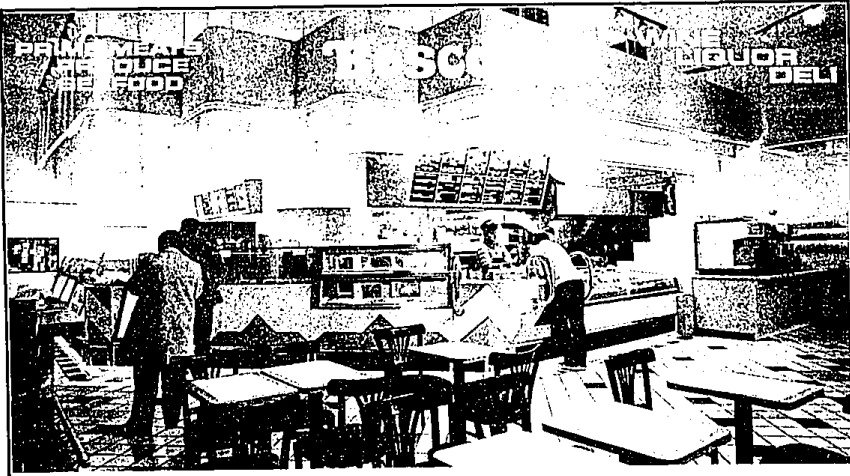
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