

At your disposal

Area consortium to weigh waste collection options

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Alternatives to an Oakland County solid waste disposal plan will be unveiled in April for Farmington and Farmington Hills elected officials.

The two cities joined Southfield, Novi, Walled Lake and South Lyon last summer to form the Southwest Oakland County Solid Waste Consortium to study alternatives to soaring solid waste disposal costs.

Farmington and Farmington Hills, like the other consortium communities, have been faced with increasing refuse collection and disposal costs. But when asked to join the Oakland County plan more than a year ago, the communities decided not to, primarily because of estimated costs and other concerns with the plan.

A first draft of alternatives, developed by the consortium's Kansas City-based consulting firm, Black & Veatch, will be presented to consortium representatives this month.

The consortium also retained the services of Miller, Canfield, Paddock and Stone, legal and financial experts, to assist in this effort. It was financed by a contribution from each community equal to 50 cents per resident.

"The consortium will hone in on those recommendations it considers

appropriate," said Farmington city manager Robert Deadman, consortium chairman.

THE CONSULTING firm's recommendations, particularly those preferred by the consortium, will be presented to a still-unscheduled joint meeting of the six city councils in April.

"If there are questions, they can be heard by everyone. They (city council members) may ultimately have to go back and deliberate among themselves," Deadman said.

Consultants have developed six alternatives. They include continuing with each city's existing disposal methods; joining the Oakland County solid waste disposal program; developing new landfill sites; and developing a waste-to-energy project "similar to the county's except it would be in the southwest section," Deadman said.

Alternatives also include joining adjacent counties' plans, such as Wayne County, and developing a recycling facility that's more encompassing than what's proposed by Oakland County, Deadman continued.

Three major factors play a role in reviewing alternatives: capacity for solid waste, cost and "is it practical, can we do it, will it get the job done?" Deadman said.

"Because the issue is so great and

the impact is so significant, we better take a hard look at this," said Tom Blaseil, Farmington Hills public services director. "We want what's best for the community and what is reasonable in the long term."

WHILE THE consortium is reviewing its alternatives the Oakland County Municipal Solid Waste Board is updating its 1983 plan as approved by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and required by Michigan Public Act 641 of 1978.

State officials extended the update deadline to January 1989 so more coordination is possible between solid waste plans for all Michigan counties, said George Schutte, Oakland County chief engineer working on the plan.

"We're trying to meet the target dates," Blaseil said, referring to the consortium's study and eventual decision.

The county plan is expected to cover the needed facilities for solid waste disposal as well as estimated costs, Schutte said.

When the county plan is updated, public hearings will be conducted. Oakland County communities will be asked to approve the plan. Approval requires 67 percent community compliance.

Staff writer Jackie Klein contributed to this report.



Walled Lake residents Orville Van Sickle (left) and Dennis Daley collect trash on Violet in Farmington's Floral Park subdivision Monday morning for Livonia-based Peter McCreedy Trucking. McCreedy hauls Farmington's trash

to landfills in Lyon Township and Washtenaw County. Browning-Ferris Industries, a national solid waste disposal company, owns the landfills.

JOHN STORMZAND/staff photographer

Alliance identifies garbage concerns

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Members of a six-community solid waste consortium have significant concerns about Oakland County's waste disposal plan.



Robert Deadman
consortium chairman

The Oakland County plan, as originally proposed, 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 sold to the utility companies, according to George Schutte, Oakland County chief engineer working on the solid waste plan.

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've got four or five concerns with the county plan. But we are not at war in any sense," said Farmington city manager Robert Deadman, consortium chairman. The consortium consists of representatives from Farmington, Farmington Hills, Novi, Southfield, Walled Lake and South Lyon.

Costs are among the significant concerns with the county plan. Though all costs are still estimates, the county plan will cost big bucks

for communities in southwest Oakland County, Deadman said.

FOR EXAMPLE, if Farmington now pays \$5-\$7 a ton to dispose of solid waste, the cost could increase to \$40-\$50 a ton under the county plan.

"The cost could accelerate as much as 10 times the current cost or higher," Deadman said. "Another problem with the Oakland County plan is how they propose to finance the costs."

How each community would be assessed its share of costs is unknown. "There is no mechanism how the county would pay that part of the costs," Deadman said.

According to the consortium, more than 6 mills (\$6 per \$1,000 of assessed value) would have to be levied to cover the cost of the plan. Current legislation only allows up to 3 mills for waste disposal. Another problem is the waste control proposed by the county. The county plan calls for including waste not only from residences but also from industrial and commercial facilities. The communities generally

only handle residential solid waste, Deadman said.

For example, Farmington now controls 18 tons of solid waste per day. Under the county plan, that would jump to 60-69 tons. "The costs and administrative process to control that stream must be considered," Deadman said.

Under the plan, responsibility for ensuring that all waste generated in the municipality is delivered to the county board would lie entirely with the municipality, said Roger Smith, Southfield public services director.

This responsibility is viewed by the consortium as having huge, largely hidden administrative costs, Smith said.

THE PLAN requires that all waste generated in the county be disposed of in the county.

This criteria ignores economic opportunities elsewhere and poses special problems," Smith said.

"More waste leaves Oakland County than enters the county. The restriction means that the need for landfills in the county is artificially increased."

Deadman agreed: "Some of the most environmentally sound landfill sites are located outside the county. We are objecting to building new sites (in the county) that will cost more money than ones we are already using."

"This (solid waste disposal) is a national problem. We ought to be able to address it on a statewide basis. The county board, as first structured, allowed each participating community one vote, regardless of the amount of waste contributed to

the system," Deadman added.

The consortium's six communities, Deadman said, generate 40 percent of the county's waste. That means six votes vs. 39 (the number of communities that have agreed to join the county project).

"Perhaps we're not comfortable that the urban southwest has the kind of input we need to control costs," Deadman said.

Staff writer Jackie Klein contributed to this report.

Waste consortium's disposal alternatives

Southwest Oakland Solid Waste Consortium's six alternatives to be considered for solid waste disposal:

- continuing with each city's existing disposal methods.
- joining the Oakland County solid waste disposal program.
- developing new landfill sites.

• developing a waste-to-energy project similar to Oakland County's except it would be in the southwest section.

- joining adjacent counties' plans, such as Wayne County.
- developing a recycling facility that's more encompassing than what's proposed by Oakland County.

Central kindergarten option

By Casey Hane
staff writer

A central kindergarten program will no longer be a pilot project this fall, but a permanent option for parents and students, Farmington Public Schools officials said.

The centralized program, housed at two early childhood centers, will be an option to traditional kindergartens in elementary schools. Officials say the program ties into the "choice" programs proposed for elementary students this fall and expected to be approved by the school board in early March.

Traditional kindergarten programs will continue at elementary schools.

"That's kind of how we're promoting it — that parents have choices," said Dick Rutter, supervisor at the Fairview Early Childhood Center, which had two sections of the centralized program this year. "They're not pilots anymore. They're just called Central Kindergarten."

Two additional sections were housed at the Alameda Early Childhood Center during the pilot period.

Both kindergarten programs have

the same curriculum objectives with a "hands-on" approach to learning, Rutter added. The difference is that the Central Kindergartens are in early childhood settings, while the traditional programs are in elementary settings. Both are half-day programs.

RUTTER SAID both early childhood centers are getting calls regularly inquiring about the central programs. "We've been getting lots and lots of calls," he said. "We're going to accommodate everybody (who wants to enroll). There will be no limit."

This year's pilot drew 70 students in four sections of kindergarten classes. It employed two teachers. This helped ease an overcrowding problem at elementary schools, school officials said; kindergarten enrollment alone increased by 87 students, according to fourth Friday head counts last fall.

This influx of students at the elementary level has prompted Farmington school trustees to study various alternatives, including programs of choice that would be offered in vacant district classrooms. The proposal, made recently by superintendent

ent Graham Lewis, will be considered with other options at the March 1 school board meeting.

The choice option was suggested when several hundred parents in the community voiced opposition to its redistricting at January and February meetings.

Central kindergarten was also an issue in Farmington in early 1987, when several hundred parents attended a school board study session on the subject. Feelings ran against centralizing kindergarten district-wide, but one parent suggested the centralized program as an option. It was instituted as a pilot program last fall.

PARENTS WERE concerned with safety factors, such as children riding the school buses, and that children would not necessarily attend kindergarten with neighborhood friends in a centralized setting.

Rutter, a former elementary principal, called the centralized program successful. He encourages parents to review their options before enrolling their kindergartners.

"I'm convinced," he said, "that kindergarten kids are an integral part of things here (early childhood center). We're doing it in a very unique way."

Rutter said there is an active parent group at Fairview who get "directly involved" with the kindergarten program.

A brochure detailing all programs offered at the early childhood centers, including Central Kindergarten, is available, Rutter said.

Two public meetings have also been scheduled to allow interested parents to visit the centers and kindergarten classrooms. Both will be held at 7:30 p.m., one at Alameda on Wednesday, March 2, the other at Fairview on Thursday, March 3.

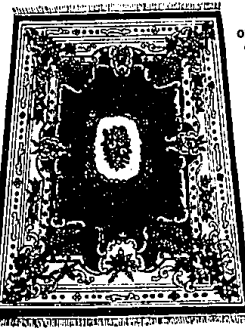
The program will consist of a tour of the center, information from teachers and supervisors and slides of activities.

Registration for all Farmington kindergarten programs will be held March 7-11 at elementary schools and early childhood centers.

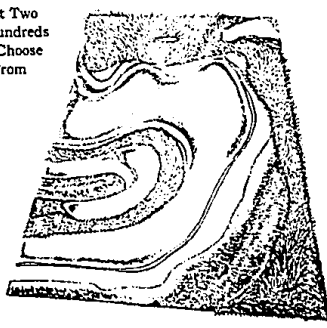
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Gayle Zimmerman, an Alameda centralized kindergarten program teacher, helps Kristen Oleson, 5, wrap a package.