

Cities consider trash burning alternative

See related editorial

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Oakland County's biggest incinerator authority will hear alternative plans for a \$50 million trash-to-energy facility in Madison Heights.

At its Friday meeting, the Southeast Oakland County Resource Recovery Authority (SOCRRA) is scheduled to hear from a company that wants to build an alternative facility to convert trash to a clean-burning coal substitute.

The proposal has its skeptics — including those who say the technology has never been proven.

But proponents say it would save tax money while providing communities such as Beverly Hills, Birmingham and Troy with an alternative to burning trash.

SCHEDULED TO address SOCRRA at its 1:30 p.m. meeting is Entropic Technologies Corp. of Lansing.

Spokesman Mark A. Battaglia said the company has developed the technology needed to convert trash to a

nibetic fuel, called syncoal. It intends to sell to companies like Delta Edison.

His company would finance and build the facility without public money, Battaglia said, eliminating the need for SOCRRA communities to permit taxes or bond revenue to finance its \$50 million trash-to-energy incinerator.

"All SOCRRA would have to do is free to provide a steady stream of trash," Battaglia said this week.

SOCRRA — FORMERLY known as the Southeastern Oakland County Generatory Authority, or SOGAA — is a consortium of 14 communities. It are: Berkley, Beverly Hills, Birmingham, Clawson, Hazel Park, and Oakridge, Huntington Woods, Dearborn, Madison Heights, Grosse Pointe Park, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak, Royal Oak Township and Troy.

From the mid 1950s until approximately 16 months ago, SOGAA operated a large incinerator on John R. rd. of 12 Mile in Madison Heights.

In July 1988, however, the incinerator was shut down because emissions didn't meet Michigan's air quality standards.

SOCRRA HAS a \$50 million plan

to refit the facility to meet state air quality standards and upgrade it to a trash-to-energy facility that generates electricity by burning garbage.

"We are scheduled to apply for an air quality permit next week," said Thomas G. Walfen, SOCRRA general manager. "We could have the new (trash-to-energy) facility operating by late 1992."

Walfen said he personally has misgivings about the proposed trash-to-syncoal facility — particularly since the technology has not been proven.

"But we're quite willing to take a look at it."

OTHERS, HOWEVER, are more optimistic.

For example, Madison Heights city councilwoman Marilyn R. Russell wants SOCRRA to take a close look at Entropic's proposal, she said.

"I'm not a chemist or an engineer," said Russell, a buyer for Oakland County, "so I have to rely on what the experts tell me. And everybody I've talked to says the technology will work."

Russell was one of several local officials who saw a demonstration of the technology at Entropic's supplier

'The technology sounds almost too good to be true. It's almost like talking to Edison when he came up with his first light bulb.'

— Marilyn R. Russell
Madison Heights councilwoman

company, APV Chemical Machinery Inc., in Saginaw.

The Saginaw-based company is a subsidiary of APV, Plc., a multinational firm with headquarters in the United Kingdom.

"Their operation is the best I've ever seen," Russell said.

Peter J. Connors, assistant city manager of Madison Heights and a member of SOCRRA, has also seen a demonstration. He was out of town and unavailable for comment, according to his secretary.

But Connors favors SOCRRA's taking a close look at Entropic's proposal, Russell said.

"The technology sounds almost too good to be true," Russell said. "It's almost like talking to Edison when

he came up with his first light bulb."

BATTAGLIA SAID he understands

how communities may be skeptical. For one thing, his company doesn't have an operating plant, although it has patented the technology. Nor does it have a contract with a buyer — like Detroit Edison.

"But it's a chicken-or-the-egg situation," Battaglia said. "We can't get a buyer until we have a reliable supply of trash and we can't get a supply of trash until we have a buyer."

His company was founded in 1984, he said. It has received almost \$2 million in grants, indirectly, from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

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... Firms says process is cleaner

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Several companies claim to have the proven technology needed to convert trash to some useable product, thus providing an attractive alternative to incineration.

But "proven" is the key word, said Roger Smith, deputy director of Oakland County's solid waste unit implementing a \$470 million waste management program that relies on

incineration, recycling and burying rubble.

"I've visited a number of cutting-edge companies that claim to have technology," said Smith. "But one of them can demonstrate a system to handle any volume."

Smith said he has no specific knowledge about Entropic Technologies Corp., the Lansing-based company that wants to substitute its privately owned and operated facility for the \$50 million trash-to-energy

incinerator planned by the Southeast Oakland County Resource Recovery Authority.

SOCRRA, a consortium of 14 communities including Birmingham and

Troy, is scheduled to receive a proposal from Entropic at its 1:30 p.m. meeting Friday at the Beverly Hills

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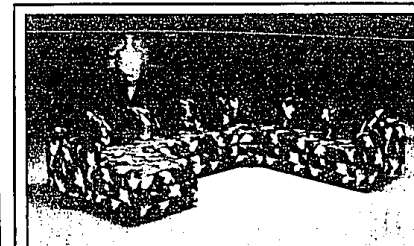
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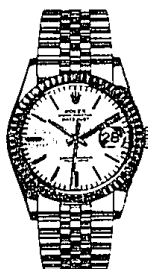
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