

County OKs Auburn Hills recycling center

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Oakland County has approved a \$15 million recycling facility, the least controversial component of its proposed \$470 million solid waste program.

But county commissioners delayed any decision on how to pay for the program until individual communities pledge their municipal waste to the system.

"This was a good meeting," commissioner Roy Rewold said after Thursday's meeting of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners. "We took some important concrete steps."

Foremost among them was approving the contract for the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) that will recycle about 200 tons of trash daily.

Plans call for it to be located at Brown and Giddings roads in Auburn Hills, next to the proposed waste-to-energy incinerator, with construction beginning later this year.

"The MRF is important," Rewold said. "It signals Oakland County is serious about dealing with its solid waste. We hope to recycle about 40 percent of our waste."

Commissioners took another important step by allocating \$3.58 million to buy the 32 acres of land on which the MRF and incinerator would be located if plans are ap-

proved. The county's option to buy the property, at \$110,000 per acre, expires July 12.

THE MONEY is advanced from the county's general fund, at 8.5 percent interest, and will be repaid if the bonds are sold later this year as scheduled.

Like the contract for the recycling facility, buying the land had been held up for more than a month because commissioners have not yet decided how to go about selling bonds to finance the solid waste program, a \$10 million computer center and a \$80 million addition to the courthouse.

They are concerned about a threat from tax foe Richard Headlee who said he will sue the county if commissioners sell the bonds without first scheduling a vote of the people.

Headlee claims selling the bonds is circumventing constitutional prohibitions against raising taxes without voter approval.

Commissioners disagree, at least on the solid waste program, because the bonds would be repaid with tipping fees rather than taxes. They base their contention on three separate legal opinions.

Commissioners are still concerned about Headlee's threat, as indicated by their approval of the recycling center without providing any money.

Commissioners expect to address the issue of bonding in June or July, after individual communities sign intergovernmental agreements committing to the county waste system. Those agreements commit their municipal waste to the system which needs about 400 tons of trash daily, about 200 for recycling and another 200 for the incinerator.

THOSE AGREEMENTS guarantee a sufficient amount of trash to generate enough tipping fees to repay the bonds.

Commissioners scheduled another meeting for this Thursday to discuss those intergovernmental agreements.

"I'm very pleased with the way things are going," said Rewold, perhaps the waste plan's staunchest supporter.

Although there was no discussion on any possible vote of the people, commissioners Thursday all but eliminated any possibility of putting the question on the Aug. 7 primary ballot. The deadline for putting an issue on that ballot is Tuesday.

Although most commissioners have ruled out any vote, the deadline for putting any such issue on the November ballot is Aug. 28.

County pays more than appraisal

County commissioner Thomas A. Law, R-West Bloomfield, has asked Oakland County to establish a standard procedure for purchasing property.

He was visibly upset about the lack of such a procedure at Thursday when it was disclosed the county will pay about \$750,000 over the appraised value of 32 acres in Auburn Hills.

Plans call for the land, at Brown and Giddings roads, to be the location of both the county incinerator and the recycling facility, key components of the controversial \$470 million solid waste plan.

The county has an option to buy the land at \$110,000 per acre, a price Law said was excessive. "I submit the real value of the land is about

\$50,000 per acre," he said.

Acknowledging that buying the Auburn Hills property was probably too far along to renegotiate, Law said the county should develop a procedure for future land transactions.

That procedure, he insisted, should include obtaining an updated appraisal.

No action was taken on his request.

Other commissioners, however, dispute the accuracy of the assessment, saying it is not reflect the property's true value.

Property values in booming Auburn Hills change so rapidly, they note, that even if any assessment is accurate at the time, it is likely to change anyway.

Prosecutor to review allegations

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

The prosecutor's office will review the complaint of tax foe William McMaster against prominent Republicans, according to Gerald D. Poisson, Oakland County chief assistant prosecutor, "even though it has the aspects of a political statement."

The prosecutor's office declined to return telephone calls earlier in the week to discuss the complaint. But Poisson commented on it privately during Thursday's meeting of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners.

Prosecutors received McMaster's complaint on May 22, the same day it was written, Poisson said. "And we're treating it like we'd treat any other letter."

In his complaint, McMaster said Jim Alexander, Republican county chairman, and Patrick Anderson, a prominent ally of tax foe Richard Headlee, of "unlawful interference

with the American electoral process."

McMaster also accuses County Executive Daniel T. Murphy and Oakland County commissioners of not providing the required public notice before acting or discussing the county's solid waste program.

MCMMASTER CLAIMS Alexander and Anderson, or their associates, harassed or intimidated candidates recruited by a group McMaster represents, the Oakland County Taxpayers Association.

McMaster claims they talked to those candidates over the phone and, among other things, promised to refund filing fees and related expenses if they withdrew from races for county commissioner.

Alexander and Anderson termed the charges "ridiculous" or "ludicrous."

Both acknowledged they may have talked to candidates recruited by McMaster. But they denied any act of intimidation, insisting they simply exercised their rights of free speech.

Springtime hot line

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If you don't have a red ribbon for your car, you may pick one up at participating 7-ELEVEN STORES in the metro area starting May 1. 7-ELEVEN, WTVS/CHANNEL 56 and MOTHERS AGAINST DRUNK DRIVING (MADD) and 30 other voluntary organizations and businesses have joined to promote safe celebrations year-round, but especially during spring prom and graduation time.

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