

Never say die

Firm seeks to re-activate incinerator

By PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

Just when incinerator firms thought it was safe to go back into the water:

Two Oakland County leaders — who initially supported the proposed solid waste program, but thought it was dead — say they will look into an offer to re-activate plans for a waste-to-energy incinerator in Auburn Hills.

"We've got to consider it," said Commissioner Larry Crake, chairman of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners.

Crake, of Waterford, was referring to a proposal from Ogden Martin Systems, Inc., of Fairfield, N.J., to possibly construct the incinerator.

The \$200 million incinerator was the cornerstone of Oakland's con-

TRASH

transient solid waste plan. That is, until earlier this year when Westinghouse backed out of its contract.

Without a contractor — and without support from individual communities that refused to pledge their municipal trash — the waste program seemed dead.

But a combination of factors — including the offer from Ogden Martin and a U.S. Supreme Court ruling (see related story) — change all that.

Crake, County Executive Daniel Murphy and others are exploring the role, if any, the county should play in managing solid waste in light of the offer from Ogden Martin.

Among them is county commis-

sioner Marilyn E. Gopling, R-Bloomfield Hills, who said it's prudent to consider the company's offer. "I don't want to give them any money. But we should see what they offer. We may need an incinerator one day."

Crake and Murphy met Thursday morning to talk about the county's role. But both leaders — who supported the initial county plan, including the incinerator — emphasized that no decision is on the horizon.

The results of their meeting will be included in a special part of Thursday's regular meeting of the county board devoted exclusively to solid waste.

"We're just talking," said Crake.

"There's lots of uncertainty," Murphy agreed. "That's not enough," he said, pointing to the

five-page letter from Ogden Martin dated May 26.

Ogden Martin was one of two unsuccessful bidders on the original contract to build the incinerator in Auburn Hills. There's no need to give up on the project just because the successful bidder can no longer carry out the contract, the company said.

"At this juncture, it costs the county little to preserve its plan and tremendous investment in the WTE (waste-to-energy) procurement, permitting and contract negotiations by naming another vendor," Ogden Martin said in its letter.

It was referring to an estimated \$10 million Oakland invested in the solid waste program before the incinerator contract was voided.

Ruling outlaws importing trash

By PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

Oakland County officials are puzzled and uncertain about last week's ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court saying Michigan cannot prohibit the importation of trash from other states.

"We're all wondering what this means," said Roger Smith, Oakland's deputy director of solid waste management. "Even the state DNR (Department of Natural Resources) is puzzled at this point."

"Every lawyer is interpreting it (the high court ruling) differently."

The high court, last Monday ruled, it is an unconstitutional interference with interstate commerce for Michigan to bar pri-

vate companies from importing trash from other states.

Officials, including Oakland County Executive Daniel Murphy, are worried Michigan will become a dumping ground for New York, New Jersey or other eastern states.

Smith and others are also concerned the court ruling would negate state attempts to require each county to deal with its own trash. Foremost among those attempts is legislation that restricts or bans counties from importing trash from other communities, which is being implemented in stages.

"If the court rules we can't block trash from other states," said Smith, "how can we block trash from other counties?"

Welfare mothers survive plan to cut aid

A plan to cut welfare benefits for women who have more babies crashed in bipartisan flames last week in the state Senate.

It was offered by inaverted Democrat Gil DiNello of Macomb County

as an amendment to the Social Welfare Act. It lost 8-29.

Voting yes were two Democrats and six Republicans, including Robert Grube of Northville.

Opposed were 13 Republicans

and 16 Democrats — including Michael Beuchard, R-Birmingham,

Mat Danakiss, R-Lake Orion, William Faust, D-Westland, Jack Fax-

on, D-Westland, George Hart, R-

West Bloomfield.

"This amendment penalizes the child," objected conservative Republican Jack Wellborn of Kalamazoo. "It would be an incentive to abortion."

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