

Commissioners hot for Grand Rapids incinerator

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

The Ogden Martin incinerator in Grand Rapids appears to be clean, efficient and acceptable to residents in Kent County, according to Oakland County commissioners who visited the facility last week.

"It's a clean, well-run facility that has no problem with emissions," said commissioner Lawrence R. Pernick, D-Southfield, one of six county board members to visit the incinerator last Monday at the invitation of Ogden Martin.

The New Jersey-based company, a publicly-held environmental management services company established in 1984, proposed to build a similar facility in Oakland County as the cornerstone of a \$500 million solid waste management program.

In addition to Pernick, other commissioners to visit the facility are Ruth A. Johnson, R-Holly, who is vice chairwoman of the board of

TRASH

commissioners, Nancy McConnell, R-Bloomfield Hills, Dennis Aaron, D-Oak Park, Kay Schmid, R-Novi, and Donna R. Hunsont, R-Clarkston.

Several residents and at least one representative of the Oakland County Solid Waste Management Department also visited the facility. Several newspapers were also invited to send representatives.

No odor

Pernick said he was impressed with the Grand Rapids facility. "There was no odor and it appeared to be efficient."

"I'm also interested in the way it has been accepted by the communities it serves," he said. "That's something we haven't been able to do here."

Pernick was referring to the effort

and expense Oakland put forth for its proposed incinerator, only to be rejected by communities it was designed to serve. Those communities have steadfastly refused to sign so-called intergovernmental agreements committing their respective communities.

"The Grand Rapids facility apparently had more input from the communities," said Pernick. "It was built from the grass roots up."

McConnell said she is impressed with the facility's level of performance. "It's emissions are 80 percent less than limits imposed under its operating permit."

The 625-ton waste-to-energy incinerator has been closely monitored since it opened in January 1990, according to Cheri G. Oviatt, air quality engineer for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Emissions low

"It's simply not a problem," he

said. "Emissions are consistently lower than allowed under its permits."

Oviatt said there were a spate of complaints when the facility began operating in early 1990. "But most of them had nothing to do with the incinerator."

"But now we don't even get complaints. People have just accepted it."

John Sinkovics, science and environmental writer for The Grand Rapids Press, said he has written numerous stories about the incinerator and followed it closely since it opened. "It's never had serious problems," he said.

Asked for the name of any group strongly opposed to the facility, Sinkovics said the incinerator initially had opponents. "But you won't find any now."

The Western Michigan Environmental Action Council has serious concerns about the Grand Rapids facility, but no specific complaints

about the incinerator, said Julie Stoneman, natural resources director.

"The incinerator is performing within standards," she said. "Whether or not those standards adequately protect people is another question."

Stoneman said most environmental groups, including hers, are critical because Kent County did not implement a comprehensive reduc-

tion and recycling program at the same time it was planning and constructing the incinerator.

Kent County currently has an extensive drop-off system for recycling, she said, and will institute some curbside recycling next year.

"If we had put the same resources into a recycling program," Stoneman said, "we'd have a state-of-the-art system."

To consider or not to consider. . .

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

Oakland County commissioner Lillian Jaffe Oaks is philosophical about her support for continuing—at least for the time being—deliberation on a proposal for a waste-to-energy incinerator in Auburn Hills.

"I'll listen," said the Southfield Democrat. "But that doesn't mean I'll go along with it." Oaks and a majority of her colleagues on the Oakland County Board of Commissioners Thursday decided to continue deliberation on a proposal from Ogden Martin Systems Inc. to build an incinerator.

Commissioners also extended separate contracts with Waste Management Inc. for a landfill in Orion Township and a recycling facility in Auburn Hills.

None of the commissioners' action obligates the county. Commissioner Donn L. Wolf, R-Farmington Hills, put it this way. "It's always smart to have as much information as long as it doesn't cost money."

Collectively, however, they enable commissioners to keep their options open, at least as far as the county's floundering solid waste program is concerned.

As Oaks might say, "We voted to listen."

Not all commissioners wanted to listen. Commissioner Donald E. Bishop, R-Rochester Hills, wanted to kill the Ogden Martin proposal and any notion about building an incinerator.

"Why prolong the agony?" Bishop said in the GOP caucus preceding Thursday's regular county board meeting. "The people don't want an incinerator, so why not kill it now?"

The answer came from several commissioners, including chairman Larry Crake who said, "This isn't the appropriate time to get rid of it (the incinerator). We've got to listen to what Ogden Martin has to say."

OCC students aid hungry

Oakland Community College students are participating in a July 1 barbecue to benefit St. Leo's Soup Kitchen, Detroit.

The meal will be served at St. Leo's, 15th and Grand River, Detroit.

Afterward, students will help paint the soup kitchen's interior, then clean streets in the surrounding neighborhood.

The event is part of "Into the Streets," a national initiative designed to introduce students to community service. The event is sponsored by Students Against Hunger, as well as 65 other state and national organizations.

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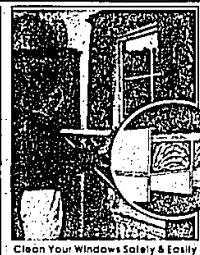
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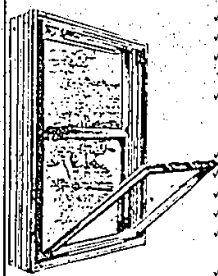
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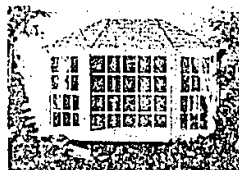
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