

County keeps incinerator project alive — for now

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

It's alive, but barely... despite heated opposition, despite abandonment by the original contractor and despite rejection from communities that would feed it.

Oakland County's controversial waste-to-energy incinerator — once thought to be dead — still has life... or at least a faint pulse.

At their regular meeting Thursday Oakland County commissioners rejected a proposal to kill the waste-to-energy incinerator, by abandoning it until they can fully evaluate an offer that, in effect, gives a reprieve to the incinerator proposed in Auburn Hills.

By a 15 to 10 vote, commissioners voted to let incinerator remain alive, at least as a possibility, until they can fully assess the ramifications of an offer from Ogden Martin Systems Inc.

The New Jersey-based company last month offered to build the incinerator, even though the original contractor, Westinghouse Electric Corp., unilaterally withdrew from the project earlier in the year.

The vote doesn't mean commis-

sioners necessarily want the incinerator. But there's too much at stake — including nearly \$4 million if the county abandons the incinerator — to totally disregard the offer from Ogden Martin.

"We can't just drop it (the incinerator) and expect the issue (handling solid waste) to go away," said Commissioner Donald W. Jensen, R-Birmingham, who voted with the majority. "I think we should at least look into it."

During the public comment portion of the meeting, W. John Phillips, vice president of Ogden Martin, said Oakland County "has gone a long distance" trying to implement its solid waste program.

His company's offer, Phillips said, would simply enable Oakland to maintain the incinerator as an option.

Also during public comment, opponents of the incinerator, including Tara Goei of Rochester Hills, urged commissioners to kill or abandon the proposed facility, regardless of any offer from Ogden Martin or anybody else.

"The names of contractors may change," said Goei, "but the prob-

lems (health and environmental hazards) remain the same."

Commissioner Tom Law, R-West Bloomfield, urged his colleagues to kill the incinerator, saying they've had ample time to understand its drawbacks. "We've been studying this issue the incinerator and solid waste for more than two years. We should dump the incinerator and go ahead with recycling."

Commissioner Marilyn E. Goaling, R-Bloomfield Hills, also urged commissioners to abandon the incinerator. "We can always bring it back if we find that it's needed later," she said.

Voting to abandon the incinerator and proceeding with other plans for recycling were commissioners Donald E. Bishop, R-Rochester Hills; James D. Ferens, D-Pontiac; Gosling Law, R-E. McPherson; D-Alfred Park; Lillian Jaffe Oaks, D-Southfield; Lawrence A. Olbrecht, R-Oakland Township; Lawrence R. Pernick, D-Southfield; Hubert Prier Jr., D-Pontiac, and Rudy Seran, D-Ferndale.

Voting to keep the incinerator

alive, at least for now, were commissioners Dennis M. Aaron, D-Oak Park; G. William Caddell, R-Walled Lake; Larry P. Crake, R-Waterford; Donna R. Hinton, R-Clarkston; Jensen; Ruth A. Johnson, R-Holly; Law; Nancy McConnell, R-Bloomfield Hills; John P. McCulloch, R-Royal Oak; Frank H. Millard, R-Sylvan Lake; John E. Olsen, R-Huntington Woods; Charles E. Palmer, R-Clawson; John G. Pappageorge, R-Troy;

Kay Schmid, R-Novi; Richard G. Skarritt, R-Milford, and Donn L. Wolf, R-Farmington Hills.

Commissioners Teresa Krause, D-Troy, and David L. Moffat, R-Farmington Hills, did not vote, according to commission records.

Commissioners also authorized Roger Smith, county deputy director of solid waste management, to reopen talks with Waste Management, the successful bidder on contracts for the proposed material re-

covery facility (MRF) and the expansion of the Eagle Valley landfill in Orion Township.

Those contracts are to expire June 30. Smith said he hopes to extend those contracts while officials assess their options.

Smith said he did not know how much it would cost to extend the contracts. But he estimated it could cost the county about \$14 million if officials decide to abandon the solid waste program completely.

Trash law's revision could help county regulate input

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

It will be a relatively short time before laws are changed to enable local communities — like Oakland — to reject trash from other states, according to county commissioner Donn L. Wolf, R-Farmington Hills.

That change is aimed at counteracting last month's ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court saying states could not bar the importation of trash from other states.

The high court said any such prohibition is an unconstitutional infringement of interstate commerce.

That ruling was included in near-

ly two hours of discussion Thursday as the county board considered the future of Oakland's solid waste program, including the controversial incinerator in Auburn Hills.

Commissioners were vexed by the high court ruling which they said could negate attempts to manage solid waste within Oakland County as required by Michigan law.

One such law, Public Act 641, requires Oakland and other counties to draft plans for handling trash for a minimum of 20 years.

"How can you deal with solid waste if you can't control the amount coming into landfills?"

asked commissioner John G. Pappageorge, R-Troy.

Wolf, who is a member of the energy and environment task force on the National Association of Counties (NACo), said that organization — with support of state and federal legislators — anticipated such a problem, and the possibility of a court ruling.

"We've been working on proposals that would get away from any infringement of interstate commerce, yet give states and communities the option of accepting or rejecting trash from other states," he said.

asked commissioner John G. Pappageorge, R-Troy.

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Brother, sister to represent GOP

Besides the husband-wife teams attending the Republican National Convention, Michigan will send a brother-sister team.

Jim Hall of Southfield was elected a delegate at-large. Hall is a second vice chair of the Republican State Committee. A member of his city's Total Living Commission, Hall is a AAA general agent in Farmington Hills.

His sister is Yvette Charles, Southfield city director for the GOP. She will be an alternate from the 12th Congressional District.

The husband-wife teams are Gov. John (delegate) and Michelle (alternate), Engler, Diane (delegate) and Sen. Mat Dunaskies of Lake Orion

and Katie Chrysler (delegate) and Dick Chrysler (alternate) from Brighton.

Michigan will send 72 delegates and 72 alternates to Houston Aug. 16-20. One-third were elected at-large and two-thirds from congressional districts at the GOP state convention May 29-30 in Detroit.

Media, substance abuse groups to meet

Your Message and the Media, a conference for groups involved in substance abuse prevention, is scheduled Tuesday, June 16, at the Oakland Schools Kiva, Waterford.

Conference speakers include Judith Diner Berne, assistant managing editor of the Observer and Even-

ing Newspapers; Tom Bell, news and program director of WWJ-AM; Spencer Koch, station manager of WJBK-TV and Dr. Louise Reid-Ritchie, Detroit Free Press columnist and executive assistant to the publisher.

The conference is sponsored by

PREVCO, the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Southeast Michigan. The non-profit agency is dedicated to preventing substance abuse through public awareness and education.

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