

Sunol compost site gets dumped

Residents celebrate as Waste Authority puts plan on hold

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SAN LEANDRO — The Alameda County Waste Management Authority board put the proposed compost facility for Sunol on hold Wednesday, effectively killing the tumultuous project.

It was a big victory for Sunol residents, who for years resisted efforts by the ACWMA to place an open-air facility on Andrade Road off Interstate 680 that would truck in up to 600 tons of food and yard waste a day.

The unanimous vote by the 17-member board largely was in reaction to a 4-0 vote by the county Board of Supervisors two weeks ago that said the plan did not comply with the county's general plan.

Many authority board members expressed frustration over what some viewed as an unfair pre-emptive action taken by the Board of Supervisors, which was led by Supervisor Scott Haggerty, who represents a portion of Sunol. "No one wants to go through this only to get it killed by the Board of Supervisors," said Councilwoman Claudia McCormick of Dublin, who supported the project.

"I congratulate the people of Sunol. You pushed the right buttons and you got your way. We've been had. All this while, it was a fantasy."

Supervisor Keith Carson, who sits on the authority board, was on the receiving end of some criticism.

"The (supervisors) got to take some leadership if (they) are going to say don't bother," said Nancy McEnroe, vice mayor of Piedmont.

Wednesday's vote was the culmination of several public meetings — some of which turned into yelling matches — and hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on contentious environmental impact reports.

Some board members who stood against the Sunol project reiterated their belief that the project would draw lawsuits because the location is within a mile of about 100 residents.

"We'd be headed for court battles that would last four, eight, 10 years," said Fremont Mayor Bob Wasserman. "What will that accomplish?"

The board also voted to hold a closed-door session with lawyers to review how to wiggle out of obligations with MRI, the private company that was to oversee operations at Sunol. Mayor Shelia Young of San Leandro said MRI no doubt invested money in the plan with the assumption that the Sunol site would be approved. "Who's going to pay MRI, who's spent all of this money?" she asked.

Jennifer Hosterman, Pleasanton's mayor, who opposed the Sunol site, indicated her desire to build several smaller compost facilities throughout the county. She said Pleasanton could house one such facility.

"If it's one facility of this magnitude, it will have an impact whether it's truck traffic or pollutants," she said. "Doesn't it make sense ... to have a handful of facilities scattered through the county to reduce impact?"