

## Trash proposal raises stink

BY WILLIAM JOHNSON • WJOHNSON@DAILYWORLD.COM • JUNE 12, 2008

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The St. Landry Parish Council's public hearing on a trash for cash proposal to fund road improvements Wednesday night brought out a small but extremely vocal audience.

Fewer than two dozen people were in the audience and most of them were residents of the area around the parish landfill near Beggs.

Almost without exception, they were opposed to the idea of allowing the landfill to accept trash from neighboring parishes with the fees generated dedicated to road improvements.

"This landfill is for St. Landry Parish only. That is what we voted for. I can't believe you would collect trash from outside," said Trudy Vidrine, who lives four miles from the landfill.

"It is not in your back yard. It is in ours," said Jonalyn Soileau from Beggs, who urged the council to come up with other ideas. "There are a lot of ideas. Use your minds."

One of the few to speak for the plan was Gene Prudhomme, a Lawtell business owner. And, in the end, Prudhomme was really speaking against any of the other proposals the council is considering to address problems on the parish's 1,000 miles of roads.

He said, thanks to the state's homestead exemption, most home owners don't pay any property taxes. "It all falls on us business owners," Prudhomme said.

While the council took no vote, most of its 13 members did speak at the hearing.

Council members Jerry Red, Fekisha Miller, Jimmy Edwards and Kenneth Vidrine expressed opposition to the plan and said they would not vote to put it on the ballot.

But District 5 Councilman Ronald Buschel spoke for the majority when he said he is against the plan but felt it must be put to a vote of the people.

"Whether you like it or not, we are living in a democracy. We need to let the people decide," said Buschel, in whose district the Beggs landfill is located.

District 8 Council member Pam Gautreau agreed. "We have to bring this to you. It is your parish. We can't make this decision for you," Gautreau said.

She said the time is passed to continue doing nothing. If people are opposed to the plan, then they need to be in favor of some other plan. "You have to rise to the occasion," Gautreau told the audience.

District 11 Councilman Jay Guidry agreed. "It seems everyone wants a new road but nobody wants to pay for it," Guidry said.

The idea for the expanded trash collection area was proposed earlier this year by IESI, which holds the contract to collect household trash in the parish. IESI is currently seeking to expand its operations into surrounding parishes but to do that it needs a place to put the trash.

Rather than make the decision on its own, the Solid Waste Disposal District, which oversees the landfill, has asked parish government and the parish's 12 municipalities for their option.

The proposal is one of several the council is debating to fund what has been called a \$100 million backlog of road repair and replacement needs for the parish.

The council's plan is to put several, if not all, on the ballot this fall for a public vote.