

NHC Commissioners April 2, 2018

Summary: The primary topic of discussion was the proposed economic incentive package for National Gypsum in return for re-opening their existing facility (shuttered since 2009). Approximately 15 community members spoke both in favor and opposition to granting the incentive package following presentations by Wilmington Business Development, National Gypsum, and the NHC Public Health Director. After including a requirement for stack testing within one year of plant start-up, the commissioners approved the incentive package unanimously.

This was a regularly scheduled meeting of the NHC Commissioners, starting at 4:00pm; this LWV observer had to leave the meeting at 7:00pm, before adjournment. All commissioners were in attendance.

Specific Discussion: Economic Development Grant for National Gypsum

There was a standing room only crowd at this meeting and most attendees were present for the discussion of this topic. A representative from Wilmington Business Development reiterated the economic positives to National Gypsum re-opening their facility, highlighting job creation, financial investment, and National Gypsum's history as a good corporate citizen in their communities. John King, a director at National Gypsum, presented information the company's product lines and formaldehyde emissions at other operating facilities. He noted that their formaldehyde emissions exist within a waste stream of water vapor that is derived from one of their product lines, a specialty exterior drywall product that is made with fiberglass. This product represents 3% of their manufacturing.

Philip Tarte, NHC Public Health Director, summarized the information he has received from National Gypsum and NC DEQ/DAQ over the past month and stated that he believes there is no reason to believe that the formaldehyde emissions will cause harm to members of the county, city, or community.

Approximately 15 speakers presented opinions and information during the public hearing, both in favor and in opposition to the awarding of the incentive package. Dr. Robert Parr, head of Clean Air Carolina, was unique in that he proposed some common ground steps toward bridging the divide:

- Request that National Gypsum conduct a new stack test on emissions within one year of plant start-up
- Request that NC DAQ re-initiate airborne formaldehyde monitoring in NHC (formaldehyde was removed from the watch list in 2009)

Both of these suggestions were discussed further. National Gypsum agreed to the stack test suggestion and also offered to share their own emissions monitoring data with the county on an ongoing basis. With these additions, the incentive package was approved.

A representative from NC DEQ/DAQ agreed to look into re-initiating formaldehyde monitoring, but wanted to make clear that DEQ has other means of monitoring compliance with regulations and permits and they would be using those as a matter of course.

The other significant item for discussion was a SUP request for subsidized housing apartment complex in the Monkey Junction area of Piner Road. Ten to fifteen citizens were present to provide testimony concerning this Special Use Permit request, but I do not know the results as I had to leave at 7:00pm.

No LWV follow-up is needed.

Leslie Antos - Observer