Officials oppose nuclear waste storage

Andrews commissioners will sign resolution Tuesday opposing the high-level storage

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ANDREWS — After hearing from Andrews County residents in packed meetings Thursday and on July 6, commissioners voted unanimously to sign a resolution stating their opposition to the storage of high-level nuclear waste in the county.

Dozens of residents spoke during the two meetings, with many expressing anger that Waste Control Specialists, which currently operates a low-level waste site, has gone back on a promise that they would never seek to store high-level waste in Andrews County.

WCS, in partnership with Interim Storage Partners, filed an application in 2016 to store high-level nuclear waste in Andrews County for 40 years before the waste would be moved to a permanent repository. That application is currently under review by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Andrews County Judge Charlie Falcon noted before a vote was taken that a resolution from the Commissioners’ Court would not necessarily affect the NRC’s decision.

“If a resolution in opposition gets signed, that is not a guarantee from the United States government,” he said. “We would join (Gov. Greg) Abbott, who is opposed to it. We would join August Pfluger, our U.S. representative, who has made comments that he is opposed to it ... we as a court were the last to take a stance.”

Commissioner Kerry Pack of Precinct 1 made the motion to pass the resolution, saying that most of the comments he has received from constituents have been opposing high-level waste storage.

Other commissioners echoed Pack’s statement that most residents have said they oppose the project. Commissioner Jeneane Anderegg of Precinct 3 said the court was feeling pressured to pass the resolution, and said she felt they needed to support the storage.
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wishes of their constituents.

"I think WCS has been an amazing partner for this county, but I’ve got to represent my constituents," Anderegg said.

WCS' current Andrews site opened in 2012 for the storage of Class A, B and C low-level radioactive waste.

The NRC released a draft Environmental Impact Statement in May of 2020 regarding the application to open a high-level waste site. In that report, NRC staff recommended approval of the WCS application, stating that the impact of constructing and operating a waste site at the proposed location was found to be minimal.

A final environmental impact statement and a safety evaluation report were expected to be published in May of 2021 but were delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The decision on whether to grant WCS a license would follow the release of those reports.

Falcon said the Andrews County attorney would write the resolution opposing high-level waste storage and it would be signed during the Commissioners' Court meeting next Tuesday.

The direction of Nalley-Pickle & Welch Funeral Home & Crematory of Midland. Online condolences may be made at www.npwelch.com.