

Weddington not out of the Woods yet

Debate over private sewage plant for new development continues

BY CAROLYN STEEVES

WEDDINGTON — The future of the Woods of Weddington development remains uncertain as the debate over the proposed neighborhood's sewage continues in front of the Town Council.

The council has now held three meetings concerning the Woods of Weddington, with each side getting a chance to present its information for or against the development's construction of a private wastewater treatment facility.

"We're in the throes of each side calling their experts or witnesses," said Robert Gilmartin, mayor pro tem and council member. "I think we just finished officially (Thursday) night from the development side."

Philip Walton, a partner with Infinity Partners — a developer of the Woods — was very pleased with how the meetings have been going. He was particularly happy about the reception of the crowd.

"That includes the people for and against us," Walton explained. "I think our experts have done an exceptional job at getting the facts across."

Walton claimed some people who were opposed to the wastewater treatment plant have come forward and said they've changed their minds.

Next to present is the side representing the Friends of Weddington, a citizen's group that opposes private handling of wastewater.

Janice Propst, a spokesperson for the group, told **The Mecklenburg Times** last month that she is not opposed to development of The Woods, but wants to

make sure the infrastructure in Weddington is taken care of. She does not consider the private wastewater treatment facility to be proper infrastructure.

Other opponents are concerned about lower property values, odor and a lesser quality of life. Walton said the experts there addressed all of these points.

"Procedurally speaking, we're about where Nancy (Anderson) said we were two weeks ago," he said.

Two weeks ago, Anderson, the mayor of Weddington, said, "We are far from having all the answers. We don't even have all of the questions yet."

Gilmartin predicts there will be three or four more meetings before the Town Council has all of the information its members want to make a decision.

One aspect of the meetings that Gilmartin is particularly pleased about is the public involvement.

"I wish that at every single monthly meeting we have we had that many people there," he said. He noted that he's seen a lot of people consistently attend the meetings.

"I embrace the public being involved in every single thing we do ... I think it's important that we're transparent."

Walton said that if, at the end of the hearings, the council refuses their proposal, they will go back to the drawing board.

"We'll just keep getting creative," he said.

"This is the right solution for today," he explained.

"I think building a neighborhood with this level of sustainability, this level of greenness, is something that there is a continuing demand for."