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Defeat of sewage plan deals setback to developers

By CAROLYN STEEVES

WEDDINGTON — The town of Weddington is out of The Woods — for now.

A month-long debate over whether or not a developer could build a private wastewater treatment plant in The Woods, a proposed upscale neighborhood in Weddington, ended last week. The Weddington Town Council unanimously voted to deny the proposal for the private wastewater treatment plant.

However, the developers were not deterred by the loss.

Philip Walton, a partner with Infinity Partners, said he would be meeting with his engineers right away to come up with a new plan. "We'll find a way," he said. "We're not going anywhere."

Walton reiterated that they were committed to the property and the project. Infinity Partners and the Base Group formed a

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partnership — IB Development — to build The Woods.

Members of the citizens group Friends of Weddington were excited by the vote.

"We're thrilled that the town saw that this is not the correct infrastructure (for Weddington)," Janice Propst with Friends of Weddington said.

The crowd was filled with people holding multi-colored, laminated signs reading, "NO SEWER PLANT Please!" Weddington Road was lined with signs asking the council to vote against the proposed sewer.

And vote no they did. The Weddington council voted unanimously to deny IB Development's proposal to build a private wastewater treatment plant in their neighborhood, The Woods.

"I will reluctantly and somewhat regrettably" make a motion to deny, Councilmember L.A. Smith said. She

then went through the four "findings of fact" that IB Development had to prove in their presentation.

The first finding of fact was the question of safety. The council concluded that that finding was fulfilled and they were satisfied the technology was safe.

The second finding of fact was that the use met required specifications — that all of the paperwork and applications were handled on time. The council deemed that requirement was met.

The third finding of fact dealt with adjoining property values. The developer side proved that the plant would not hurt adjoining property values, Smith said, noting that there was no evidence on either side that there would be damage to property value.

It was the fourth finding of fact that proved to be fatal for The Woods. The fourth requirement was that the proposal was harmonious with the land-use plan in Weddington and with future growth in Weddington.

The council found that they had not proven that requirement for a few reasons. Smith specifically mentioned that IB Development had not coordinated with the county. She was concerned that it would set a precedent of developers building private sewers and circumventing the system all together — thus going against the land-use plan to control growth.

The council agreed unanimously that the fourth requirement had not been met and rejected the proposal. The crowd applauded, cheered, whistled and waved their signs after the vote.

There was a late proposal by Walton to build a dry line through The Woods and work with Union County to disperse water to homes. After some discussion, Mayor Nancy Anderson asked whether that was not too little, too late. Smith responded that she didn't think it was too little, perhaps just too late.

While the issue has been decided for now, Walton has said the developers will continue to work to build The Woods.

Keny Hayes, a member of Friends of Weddington, understands that the issue will come up again.

"I don't think The Woods project is dead," he said.



Anderson