



EASTVALE: City is alarmed over manure-to-energy proposal



FILE PHOTO

Eastvale city officials are concerned about a proposal by Norco to haul tons of horse manure to a manure-to-energy conversion plant in Eastvale.

BY SANDRA STOKLEY

STAFF WRITER

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Eastvale leaders are alarmed by Norco's plan to haul tons of its horse manure into Eastvale, where it would be burned at a plant and turned into energy.

The plant would use a thermal process to incinerate the manure, according to a study prepared for the Norco City Council.

That city, known as "Horsetown USA," is home to 17,000-plus horses that produce an estimated 65 tons of manure a day.

Eastvale Councilman Ike Bootsma said he had many concerns about the proposal.

"It's like they're bringing Norco's problems into Eastvale," Bootsma said. "They need to keep their manure in their own area."

It's not clear whether Norco has the authority to build such a facility in another city. A joint powers authority controls the Western Riverside County Wastewater Treatment Plant, where a study recommended the plant be built. And Eastvale officials are unsure if their zoning laws would apply to an electrical generating plant.

Norco City Manager Beth Groves said Eastvale's concerns are premature.

"There is no project," Groves said. "There's no funding to build it."

Also, the joint powers authority that operates the River Road sewage treatment plant has not agreed to allow Norco to put the manure-to-energy facility on the property, Groves said.

Authority members include the Western Municipal Water District, the Jurupa Community Services District, the Home Gardens Sanitary District and the cities of Corona and Norco. Eastvale is not a member because its sewer service is provided by the Jurupa district.

Groves said it is no secret that "dealing with manure is an issue in Norco."

Today, the city trucks its manure to leased drying fields in Chino.

A feasibility study completed by Chevron Energy Solutions last winter concluded that that the plant was a "viable project" and could produce energy to meet Norco's needs or that the city could sell. The plant would cost an estimated \$36 million to build.

The Norco City Council decided in February to move forward with an environmental impact report.

Eastvale Planning Director Eric Norris, who called the project a “manure incinerator,” said he didn’t know about the environmental report until he received a notice about two weeks ago.

Groves said Norco had sent the required notice in May that it was preparing an environmental impact report.

“I was surprised that I hadn’t heard from (Eastvale city officials) sooner,” Groves said.

The notice that the environmental impact report was available for comments set off alarms at Eastvale City Hall. Officials of both cities, including Groves and Eastvale Interim City Manager Robert Van Nort met this past week to discuss the proposal.

Norris said important issues remain unresolved. These include whether the project would have to go through the Eastvale planning process and whether odors and pollutants might come from the plant.

“We’re concerned about the potential impacts of this thing on Eastvale neighborhoods,” said Norris, citing homes north of River Road and some being built south of the street.

Norris briefed Eastvale council members on the proposal this week. An in-depth discussion is set for the Aug. 8 City Council meeting.

“If this thing is going to be located in Eastvale, we have to be involved in some manner,” Mayor Jeff DeGrandpre said this week.

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