

NASH COUNTY COMMITTED TO RESPONSIBLE INDUSTRIAL GROWTH

The consideration of a site in Nash County near the interchange of NC Highway 97 and Interstate I-95 as a potential location for a poultry processing facility has attracted great public interest among concerned citizens as well as an abundance of questions, claims, fears, accusations and misinformation. The following information is intended to provide factual answers to some of the most common questions expressed by residents and officials of both Nash and Wilson Counties relating to this potential development project:

Why is Nash County interested in attracting this industry to our area?

The construction of a poultry facility in Nash County would create an economic boost for the area while providing much needed jobs for our local workforce that is currently struggling with the same recession conditions as the rest of the nation. The estimated capital investment from such a project would be around \$100 million in buildings, machinery and equipment.

Altogether, a hatchery and poultry processing facility would create about 1,100 new jobs. The employment benefit would extend beyond the borders of just Nash County to include a multi-county "labor-shed" full of eager job seekers. The Twin County area has a current unemployment rate of 11.8% (September, 2010) which represents about 8,179 unemployed individuals. In addition, neighboring Wilson County has a similar unemployment rate of 11.1% (September, 2010) that includes about 4,416 unemployed individuals.

The average weekly wage for the employees of the potential facility is projected to be about \$501.00 per week; very close to the current average weekly wage of all private employees in Nash County which is \$551.00 per week. Additionally, the potential workers at this facility would receive 75% of their individual and/or family health insurance coverage and other benefits from this employer. The projected total annual payroll from such a facility would be approximately \$27 million. The prospective employer has identified Nash County's current pool of job seekers as being well suited for these opportunities.

The establishment of a new poultry processing facility in the local area would also create new economic opportunities for farmers in Nash and other surrounding counties; providing special advantages for farmers with limited acreage who might find poultry significantly more profitable than traditional crop production.

Why hasn't the public received more detailed information about this potential project yet and been given opportunities to ask questions and express concerns?

While Nash County is currently in discussions with a prospective industry, the county also recognizes the importance and necessity of providing detailed information and opportunities for citizen input. Customarily, prospective industries prefer that initial discussions with county officials be conducted privately. Also, some funding sources require that official announcements not be made prematurely. These discussions are on-going and the county is still in the process of gathering information and evaluating the specifics of the proposed project. Concerned citizens have already taken advantage of one opportunity to share their concerns with the County Commissioners at the rezoning hearing held November 1, 2010. These concerns have become and will continue to be a part of the on-going dialogue with company officials and others. Citizens can rest assured that further detailed information will be made available in the next few weeks and that they will have additional opportunities to ask questions, make comments and be heard. Community forums are being planned along with a public hearing to coincide with the County Commissioner's consideration of a potential incentive package.

Would this project be consistent with the Land Development Plan for the area?

The Nash County Planning staff and Planning Board carefully reviewed the request that has been approved by the County Commissioners to rezone the 150 acre tract of land to a general industrial classification. The Nash County Land Development Plan encourages location of industrial areas based on four general criteria: 1) Proximity to major transportation corridors; 2) Location outside of protected watersheds; 3) Minimizing conflict with existing development; and 4) Availability of public utilities.

- 1) The proposed site lies only 0.3 miles from the I-95 interchange and is in close proximity to the Rocky Mount-Wilson Airport.
- 2) The property is located within a Protected Area Watershed, but the required protections do not prohibit industrial uses. The site is large enough to allow for design flexibility to address the watershed protection requirements.
- 3) The existing development surrounding the site is very low density, primarily consisting of agricultural uses with clusters of rural housing. The frontage along NC Highway 97 already includes existing commercial and industrial uses. Because of the nature of the existing development throughout Nash County, any potential industrial site would likely have at least some impact on rural residents.
- 4) Public water is currently available at the proposed location and public sewer can be extended to serve the potential site.

Since 2004, the Nash County Commissioners have rezoned several properties in the immediate area to General Commercial or General Industrial classifications. This rezoning continues the general transition of the area to a commercial/industrial node at the I-95 interchange in a manner consistent with the Land Development Plan.

How will the watersheds in Nash and Wilson Counties be affected?

The potential processing plant and hatchery sites would be located in the Tar River protected watershed. This watershed allows for these agricultural and industrial uses but requires that on-site measures be constructed to control runoff and reduce nutrients. Nash County would ensure that these measures are in place prior to the operation of the facilities.

The irrigation/spray fields would be located in the Toisnot watershed which drains into Wilson County. According to the prospective industry, the processed water from the facility would be fully treated by an on-site wastewater plant and disinfection station which would remove nutrients and contaminants to levels not detrimental to the streams, wells or fields in the surrounding area. Furthermore, nutrients in the wastewater applied to the spray fields may not exceed the agronomic rates of the crops. Crops will be cultivated in the spray fields year round and will ultimately be harvested.

Land Treatment Systems (LTS) such as this are commonly used to treat poultry wastewater. These irrigated spray fields act as a living filter to remove remaining nutrients so that the finished water filtered through the soil will meet or exceed Drinking Water Standards. The proposed wastewater plant and LTS must be permitted and monitored by the NC Department of Environment of Natural Resources and operated under Title 15A, Subchapter 2T "Waste not Discharged to Surface Waters" of the North Carolina Administrative Code.

Are adequate water resources available to accommodate the proposed industry as well as existing and future water customers?

The proposed facility would use approximately 1- 1.2 million gallons of water per day in processing and wash-down operations. The water will be supplied by the City of Rocky

Mount via a network of waterlines owned and operated by Nash County and potentially augmented by on-site wells.

The City of Rocky Mount Water Resources staff has carefully evaluated the needs of the industry and is confident that sufficient water resources are available to meet the industrial demands without adversely affecting existing customers. The recent connections to the City of Wilson were installed for exceptional drought circumstances, such as the statewide drought in 2007, and were not part of evaluating daily water needs of the industry and other customers.

The Tar River Reservoir is part of a dynamic system with a capacity of 3.3 billion gallons of stored water. The reservoir serves as a buffer during times of low inflow and it is normal for the reservoir level to fluctuate, especially during the summer months. It is possible for the reservoir level to appear lower than normal without compromising necessary water availability.

What would happen to the domestic wastewater generated by the proposed industry?

Domestic wastewater is water generated from employee kitchens, restrooms, sinks, etc. Nash County will extend its existing sewer system to connect the proposed facilities to the City of Rocky Mount wastewater collection and treatment systems.

What will be the traffic impacts on NC Highway 97?

NC Highway 97 is constructed to accommodate up to 22,000 average daily trips (ADT). The segment of the highway between NC 58 and I-95 currently serves approximately 5,700 ADT. The proposed industry estimates that the operation of the potential processing facility would generate an additional 150 trucks per day (approximately 300 ADT) and could generate up to 1,100 additional employee vehicles per day (approximately 2,200 ADT). The facility would operate two (2) processing shifts daily and an overnight clean up shift. While the truck traffic would primarily occur throughout the two processing shifts, employee traffic would be expected to peak at each shift change time.

Industrial sites are evaluated by the NC Department of Transportation during the site plan review process to determine if additional improvements are required (i.e. center turn lanes, deceleration lanes, truck entrances, traffic signals, etc.) The cost of these improvements would be paid by NCDOT.

How would the proposed project affect local property values?

Similar facilities visited by local officials during the evaluation of this project were located in the general vicinity of residential properties. While the values of these residential properties do not appear to be negatively impacted by the nearby industry, this is an area that the county will continue to explore in order to make a more definitive determination.

Would a poultry processing plant and associated spray fields create an odor problem for the surrounding areas?

Odor has been a major concern of both county officials and the general public. According to the prospective industry and local officials who have recently visited similar facilities already in operation, there is no detectable odor outside of the processing plant, hatchery or spray field locations. Measures would be in place to contain odors internally within the plant that naturally arise from the poultry processing operation and to prevent their release. In fact, industry officials assure that the only emissions from the proposed plant would be steam from water heating boilers. The on-site wastewater treatment plant would include a lagoon covered with a high-density floating blanket to trap the gas by-products and route them back into the processing facility to be recycled for fuel use or burned off by a flare. Any water released at the spray fields would have already been fully treated, eliminating potential odors.

What would be the potential impact of additional chicken farms in the county?

Nash County farmers have been engaged in poultry production on a commercial scale since the late 1970s, primarily on behalf of two existing contractors. According to the USDA, Nash County farmers managed an estimated 12.4 million chickens and broilers in 2009. The introduction of another contractor as well as local hatchery and processing facilities would provide area farmers with an additional contract option.

Eggs collected from breeder houses would be transported to the hatchery for incubation. Once hatched, the chicks would be distributed to local contract growers to house and raise until they are fully developed. The prospective industry estimates that approximately 96 additional farms would be needed to accommodate the plant. These farms could be located over a seven county area with a possible average of about thirteen (13) new farms per county.

Each farm would be required by the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources (NCDENR), Animal Waste Management Division to prepare and adhere to an Animal Waste Management Plan. Based on the amount of dry litter generated, it may be land applied at agronomic rates, reducing the need for local farmers to purchase and apply chemical fertilizer to their crops. An "agronomic rate" is an application rate per acre that does not exceed a growing crop's ability to capture the fertilizer value of the poultry waste, thus protecting surface waters. If oversaturation occurs, any complaints would be investigated by the NCDENR Environmental Specialist assigned to the appropriate county.

Why were the Nash County Intensive Livestock Operation (ILO) regulations repealed?

In June 1996, Nash County adopted Intensive Livestock Operation (ILO) regulations in response to concerns related to the proliferation of hog farms. Since that time, the state has placed a moratorium on hog operations; however the ILO regulations remained in effect. In at least one North Carolina court case, the courts have ruled that a county did not have the authority to enforce their ILO regulations. In consideration of this ruling, the County Attorney advised that Nash County's ILO regulations could not be practically defended if challenged.

While it is true that discussions with the prospective industrial client initially prompted Nash County to reconsider the ILO regulations this past summer, it was the County Attorney's written opinion regarding the practical ineffectiveness of the regulations that ultimately led the Board of Health to repeal them. Nash County is currently unaware of any counties in our area that still enforce ILO regulations.

Nash County officials will continue to critically evaluate any opportunities for economic development while ensuring that citizen concerns are addressed. Nash County remains committed to pursuing industrial development that best serves its residents as well as neighboring communities over the long term.

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