

LANDFILL

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are all tied in to the same aquifer," beneath the landfill.

"He only stands to lose a business. We stand to lose everything we have — our health," she said. Baja and her husband Glenn, who have two preschoolers, moved there five years ago.

Says Charlie Muntin, surveying his land, a touch of bitterness in his voice, "This is our lifetime investment. We have no other choice but to stay here. I can't start over again. I'll be 66 next month."

Muntin and other area residents stayed this long because of a 1974 agreement between Holloway and the township which estimated that the existing landfill would close by 1983. (Since then, the closing date has been extended to 1988.) The restoration plans called for a ski hill on the site. Some residents say they moved there after they were told by real estate agents and township officials that the promised ski hill would raise property values and draw tourists.

Now real estate agents in the area say that it would be difficult to sell homes surrounding the landfill at or near their market value.

"The same thing arises if you try to sell a home near a prison. People worry about what might happen," said Betty Barry, a salesperson with the Century 21 real estate office, 42875 Five Mile Road in Northville Township.

Area residents, who formed the Salem Citizens Committee to stop the expansion, also are frustrated by what they say is a lack of atten-

tion to their concerns from state, county and local officials.

The proposed landfill has gained the approval of both the Washtenaw County Health Department and the state Department of Natural Resources over objections from within the DNR and appeals from the Salem citizens group, Michigan state senators Lana Pollack and Robert Geake, state representative Gary Owen, and the governing board of Northville Township, which borders the Napier Road landfill.

The new landfill would sit just west of the existent site on 168 acres south of Six Mile Road between Chubb and Napier Roads. According to Holloway's application to the DNR, 80 to 90 percent of the solid waste would come from outside Washtenaw County. Three county townships utilize the existing landfill. Holloway is asking Salem Township, which uses the present landfill at no cost, to pay, along with the other two townships, to use the second site.

Robert Miller of the DNR's air pollution control commission, in a letter to William Bradford, acting chief of the ground water quality division, said that both the existing and proposed landfill violate an odor control regulation and pose "unreasonable interference with the enjoyment of life and property."

The DNR approved a construction permit for the landfill on July 12. The Salem Township Citizens Committee will appeal the ruling to the DNR, said Jim Fulkerson, a leader of the group.

The planned facility is classified as both Type II, a dump site for

household refuse from urban garbage collection, and Type III, a basin for the disposal of concrete and asphalt debris, said David Plueddemann, of the Washtenaw County Health Department. Type facilities are certified to collect hazardous wastes, he said. However, Plueddemann said, "there is no practical means to insure that no hazardous wastes are dumped at the landfill."

Both Plueddemann and the Salem citizens group questioned whether or not there was adequate clay on or near the site to cover the landfill. Residents told the DNR that Holloway had already removed enough clay from the sites listed in Holloway's application to create trenches up to 20 feet deep in one spot.

A DNR staff review of the specifications submitted by Holloway found that there was "enough clay available," said Bradford. No employee of the DNR personally checked the Salem Township site, he said.

At this point, the only thing holding up immediate work on the site is the denial of the necessary permits from the Salem Township Board. But at a secret meeting on June 28, township officials attempted to arrive at a conditional settlement with Holloway to allow "temporary" digging at the site.

Holloway, who filed a lawsuit against the township seeking court permission to proceed with his plans, rejected the board's settlement offer. The issue of allowing temporary work at the site while the lawsuit is pending has been taken under consideration by Washtenaw County Circuit Court Judge Henry Conlin. No decision has been made.

Holloway sought permits for three areas of expansion on the 865 acres he owns in northeast Salem Township. In February, after residents submitted a petition bearing 540 signatures, the township turned down Holloway's applications to build an asphalt plant, to mine sand and gravel at the proposed landfill and to convert the gravel pit into a sanitary landfill.

In May, Judge Conlin issued an order allowing temporary construction of the asphalt plant while the lawsuit is in litigation.

Residents in the rolling countryside surrounding the landfill say they are doubtful that the proposed expansion can be stopped.

"If you have enough money, you get what you want. If you don't, you lose and that's the single underlying thing in all of this," said Baja, referring in part to Holloway's purchase of the Salem Airport.

Holloway bought the airport with the intention, as expressed to the DNR, of closing it when the landfill opens because the proposed facility would have violated a state regulation forbidding the operation of dumps within 10,000 feet of an airport. Birds circling over the trash could pose hazards to the safe take-off and landing of planes.

"He would have preferred not to buy it," said John Brennan, a Brighton attorney who represents Holloway. "It was a necessity."

Said State Senator Robert Geake, who lives just two miles from the landfill in Northville Township, "Landfills are big business in this state, so anyone who succeeds in getting the permit for a landfill has got their fortunes made."

The News tried to contact Holloway four times and was told that he was expected back in the office later in the day, and lastly, that he had just gone out of town for two weeks on business.

Michigan wants to get out of sanitary landfill business

By MARY ELLEN LeBLANC
NEWS SPECIAL WRITER

The high costs to the environment and to the taxpayer may eventually put an end to the use of sanitary landfills in Michigan, say officials with the state's Department of Natural Resources.

Although landfills were once the easiest and least expensive method for handling garbage, the facilities have become environmentally hazardous and too costly to clean up in the long run, said James Cleary, acting director of the DNR.

"The best deal is to get out of the business," said Cleary. The DNR is urging an end to the use of sanitary landfills in favor of a statewide incineration and recycling system.

Their recently proposed \$300 million bond issue is aimed at setting up 40 incinerators in key spots throughout the state. With a comprehensive recycling program, the DNR's strategy could reduce by 70 percent the amount of waste which ends up in landfills. It is scheduled to go before the voters in the November 1984 general election.

But the plan does not provide any alternatives to hazardous waste landfills. And it does not cover those landfills in operation or under construction.

Although Cleary and other DNR officials emphasize the security of the most recently engineered landfills, they say that there is always possibility that something can go wrong.

Under Michigan's Solid Waste Management Act passed in 1979, the construction and operation of landfills were controlled by strict regulations to prevent air and water pollution. But contamination problems are still occurring be-

cause the act has not been strictly enforced, said Robbie DiPietro, a DNR resource specialist.

"We don't have the staff support to respond to some of the problems," said DiPietro. "We've dealt on more of a crisis type basis rather than pursuing problems as they arise."

The latest requirements for landfills call for a minimum three-foot thick compacted clay liner, followed by a foot of sand. The bottom slopes to one end where a slotted pipe collects leachate, the toxic liquid produced by decaying waste. This minimizes the chance of liquid permeating the clay base, said David Plueddemann, of the Washtenaw County Health Department. The leachate is then sprayed back over the top of the landfill or transported to a hazardous waste site, he said. A six-inch soil cover is placed daily over the refuse.

Under ideal circumstances, by the time the basin is filled up, the process of waste decay should be complete and the filling dried out. And when the three-foot thick clay cap seals the dump, no more liquid should collect at the bottom, said Plueddemann.

But a local environmental scientist says that even after the liquid is gone, toxic organic substances can permeate the clay.

"Clay is made to stop water-soluble substances; organics go right on through," explained Wally Fusilier, who works with Water Quality Investigators of Dexter. Other environmental factors, such as soil erosion, root penetration of vegetation, and channels created by burrowing animals all exert pressures on the clay lining which may eventually cause it to crack, said Fusilier.