

Dump or recycling center?

Facility on Bolingbrook border has some residents raising a stink

By Louise Brass
STAFF WRITER

A facility that handles construction and landscape waste on the border of Bolingbrook and Woodridge is too close for comfort, some residents say.

It's a dump site that smells, they maintain.

It's a recycling business that's good for the Earth, the owner says.

The owner, E.C. Rizzi and Associates, said it has an Illinois Environmental Protection Act permit to operate a landscape recycling facility on the property.

Parts of the 16-acre Bolingbrook site, just southwest of Woodward Avenue near Murphy Road, are just 500 feet from the Farmingdale Unit 24 subdivision, however, and some residents can smell gasses arising from decomposition of waste, according to residents who addressed the Bolingbrook Village Board on Sept. 13.

"It's very unsightly. It's a very unsecured site. There are no gates," said Tom Freske, who lives on Woodward Avenue. He fears a solid waste dump and transfer station could be developed at the location.

Contrary to information in a news release distributed by an unhappy resident, the business does not hold a solid waste transfer station permit for the site, said J.R. Rizzi, owner of the business, which has been in operation at the location since 1985.

He said nothing has changed at the operation, which handles construction and demolition materials such as steel, plastics and wood.

Rizzi has requested a special use permit from Bolingbrook to allow his firm to continue its operations at the site.

"It's just housekeeping," Rizzi said of the variance request.

"There's no garbage, nothing rotting, no rats and no smells. We have been a yard waste transfer station since 1997, recycling leaves, grasses and brush. It has nothing to do with solid waste," he said.

However, the residents who live near the site say large containers of what appears to be automotive oil are being left on the site, together with landscaping waste and "enormous hills" of construction waste and shredded mulch.

Mayor Roger Claar said the requests to deny the variance made Sept. 13 to the Village Board will be taken into consideration and another meeting on the subject will be announced. However, he asked the protesters not to bring in petitions, saying that is not an effective way to deal with the situation.

"I think it's fair that he (Claar) would invite us to a hearing," said Freske, who has lived in the area for one year.

"The only thing I strongly disagree with is that none of us would have known it was a solid waste site when we were looking at the property, because all it was was a big pile of dirt, and there were big piles of dirt everywhere. It was a construction site," Freske said of his subdivision.

The residents don't want Bolingbrook to approve a request by the operator for variances at the site, because they believe that would waive all requirements to screen and landscape the site.

Karen Gormley, who lives on Witham Lane, worries about possible water contamination and said not enough notification was given to residents about the request before the matter of a variance came before the Bolingbrook Plan Commission, which has recommended approval by the Village Board.

Gormley said the waste dumped at the site is likely to decompose, liquefy and sink into the ground. She also displayed photographs at

the Village Board meeting of six 5-gallon containers of oil left at the location.

"The dumping is supposed to be landscape dumping. But when they want a special permit to allow them to operate and not have screening and landscaping, we will be looking at trash," Gormley said.

Claar said he understands that the waste facility was in operation before the homes were built in the area.

But increases in smells and materials at the site are offensive, Gormley and Freske told the board.

"It started increasing six months ago. We were led to believe it was landscape for a storage area, not a dump site in town," Gormley said.

The residents never dreamed the facility would grow to the magnitude it has, Gormley said.

"It's not just landscape dumping. It could be cow manure, it could be all kinds of garbage, and it stinks," said Gormley, who with her husband, Mike, moved into the area in May.

"Construction site debris, dirt, shredded tires are all not covered. Today it smelled like an outhouse," she said after the board meeting.

Rizzi said the materials the company works with come from the construction of nearby subdivisions and are recycled into mulch, which is then dyed red or brown and sold for landscaping.

The recycled materials probably end up being purchased and used by the protesters themselves, he said, adding that recycling is a good thing.

"I don't want to say we are saving the world, but we are doing our part," Rizzi said.

Bolingbrook Village Attorney Jim Boan said the village will review the information.

"We have to investigate it all. That's part of what we would do with any project," he said.

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