

29

January 20, 2004

Memo to:

Chapel Hill Town Council  
Mayor Kevin C. Foy  
Mr. Cam Hill  
Ms. Dorothy Verkerk  
Ms. Sally Greene  
Mr. Mark Kleinschmidt  
Mr. Jim Ward  
Mr. Ed Harrison  
Mr. Bill Strom  
Ms. Edith Wiggins

Mr. Ed Kerwin, Director, and  
OWASA Board:  
Mr. Mark Marcopulus  
Mr. Milton S. Heath, Jr  
Ms. Penny Rich  
Mr. Peter C. Gordon  
Ms. Susanah P. Holloway  
Ms. Bernadette Pelissier  
Mr. John B. Smith  
Ms. Judith K. Wiseman  
Mr. Mac Clarke

Subject: Odor Control: Proposed Expansion of the Mason Farm Sewer Plant

A critical moment in the recent public hearing [Monday, January 12] on OWASA's proposed expansion of the Mason Farm Sewer plant came when Council Member Edith Wiggins asked the OWASA spokesman, Mr. Imitaz Ahmad, a question about what their goal was with respect to odor control. On a scale of 1 to 10, if the present odor level in neighboring areas is, say, 8, what will it be after these improvements are completed? What is OWASA's goal? Mr. Ahmad essentially ducked the question. As I recall, he said they had not formulated such a goal.

I suggest that the answer should be ZERO, and I urge the Town Council to require OWASA to set that as its goal, and I beg the OWASA Board of Directors to accept it and take the necessary actions to achieve it..

We have too long endured unacceptable levels of noxious odors emanating from the Mason Farm plant. My impression is that reducing odor has not been a high priority of OWASA. We are encouraged to call in with complaints, and these complaints are courteously and sympathetically received, but nothing is done. In truth it appears that nothing CAN be done, given the facilities available.

Although I have no technical knowledge of odor control, I believe near-total elimination of odor emissions is an attainable goal. A web search (go to Google and type in "odor control municipal sewer plants") turns up a great many references to the successful experiences of other cities, large and small. I will mention just two examples [see also the attached sheets].

1. Conway, S.C. & Myrtle Beach. The Grand Strand Water and Sewer Authority had a problem. "Because of the plant's proximity to homes and a golf course, odor control was a primary concern." [Sound familiar?]

The problem was attacked, and "one year later, the XR-3 floating covers are still providing an odor-free environment for the homeowners of Conway and Myrtle Beach."

Please note that ODOR-FREE.

(30)

[I had a brief conversation with Fred Richardson, Executive Director of the Grand Strand WSA, who said that they had indeed eliminated "off-site" odor from their plant.]

2. Santa Cruz, Calif. This is a city with a population, including the university, of about 54,000 people. However, its sewer plant serves a larger area with a population of about 90,000. In 2003 the city installed a new system to control odor at a cost of \$1.5 million. "The new system has eliminated odors..." emanating from the plant.

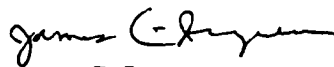
[This statement is in the attached document. It was confirmed by an assistant manager of the plant, who said the technology to control odor is readily available, though it takes some effort (and money).]

When browsing through these web sites, one is struck by the focus and emphasis placed on odor control. Cities of all sizes seem to be able to control odor emission and substantially to eliminate it. If that can be done in plants serving 500,000 people, and up, I am unable to understand why Chapel Hill cannot do it.

The present moment, when OWASA is planning a substantial expansion of the Mason Farm Plant, is a crucial time for action to correct this long-standing problem. I called some of the managers of the plants whose web sites I visited, and they were all extremely helpful. When I mentioned that OWASA was planning a significant expansion of its plant, they said that this was the perfect time to incorporate effective odor control facilities. It is imperative, they said, that this be done in the design and construction phase. To do it later would pose problems and much greater cost. [I am informed that OWASA has retained a consultant to examine the odor problem and make recommendations, but that his report has not yet been received. That makes me wonder how effectively those recommendations can be incorporated into the present expansion plan, which I had thought was already drawn up.]

I urge the Town Council to stipulate that OWASA must include clear, specific plans to eliminate odor emissions before its planned expansion can be approved. And, again, I beg the OWASA Board of Directors to embrace this goal.

Respectfully submitted,



James C. Ingram  
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C.C. Planning Board  
M.G.I.



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## FLOATING COVER CONTROLS ODOR AT WASTEWATER PLANT



Meeting the need to control odor while maintaining access to a pre-aeration basin, the Grand Strand Water and Sewer Authority of South Carolina needed a cover for its pre-aeration basins. Because of the plant's proximity to homes and a golf course, odor control was a primary concern. Geomembrane Technologies Incorporated (GTI) was chosen to develop a unique floating cover system that not only accommodated the surface activity caused by the aeration process, but also provided access to internal equipment and piping.

To accomplish this challenge, GTI chose XR-3 geomembrane designed by Seaman Corporation as its floating cover for each of the 136 ft x 41 ft basins. XR-3 was chosen because of its unique properties of strength, low thermal expansion/contraction, ease of installation and resistance to sunlight. These properties were necessary to ensure a long life and provide the flexibility needed to accommodate surface activity. The entire project was completed while the tanks were full; no disruption to the treatment system was necessary.

One year later, the XR-3 floating covers are still providing an odor-free environment for the homeowners of Conway and Myrtle Beach, South Carolina . . . just what you would expect from XR-3.

This XR-3 geomembrane liner was installed to control odor while also maintaining access to all internal equipment at the Grand Strand Water and Sewer Authority of South Carolina.

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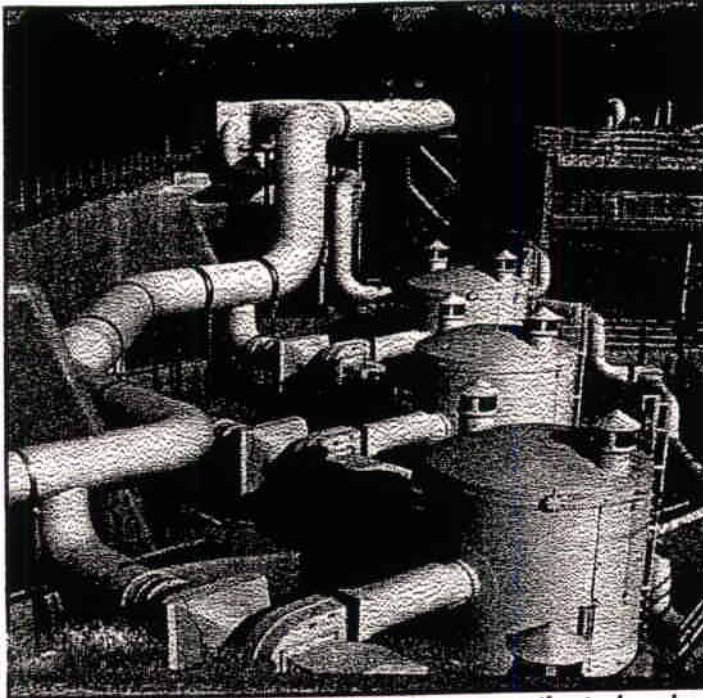
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## Odor Control Phase II Project Update, September 2003 Public Works Department

The City of Santa Cruz hired the engineering consulting firm, Carollo Engineers, to design an odor treatment system. The new system was installed by Clyde G. Steagall, Inc., and cost \$1.5 million. Construction was completed in July 2003. The new system has eliminated odors from the exhaust air of the existing trickling filter packed scrubber towers located near the plant entrance.

The new system consists of four vessels packed with virgin activated carbon. The new vessels are located near the existing towers. The exhaust from the existing towers is piped directly to the new carbon vessels for treatment prior to discharge to the atmosphere.



*Exhaust air is directed horizontally into the new activated carbon system.*

If you detect odors please continue to contact the Wastewater Treatment Facility directly at 420-6060. Sometimes you may be the first to detect an odor. If you call we may be able to correct an operational problem at the treatment plant. We appreciate your calls.

**For more information please contact:**

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