

John Beasley

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Dear Editor:

I just read the article about the Franklin residents attending the Madison meeting on GRP, and I was deeply disturbed by some of the flippant and condescending comments made by officials from Madison County.

Comments such as "It's not a perfect world" and "If you live near it, you'll be more vocal" are not reasonable responses to people who are having their health, quality of life, and property values threatened. The overall logic expressed by these officials is that people who live in rural areas must sacrifice everything they have worked to build over a lifetime so that other people can have lower property taxes.

Sadly, this is a trend that Dink DeSmith, the president of the parent company of the Franklin County Citizen, has pointed out again and again. Moneyed interests have waste that they want to dispose of, and they seek out rural areas that are desperate for revenue and woo them with distortions and false promises. Whether it is the toxic coal ash from North Carolina that is now being being shipped to the Banks County landfill, or the "poop trains" from New York shipped to Alabama, or the odious sludge being spread on Oglethorpe County farmland, the pattern is the same.

Contrary to the claims of its proponents, biomass energy plants are not green or clean energy. In 2016 a coalition of eight health care organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Lung Association issued a letter to Congress that said "Biomass is far from 'clean'- burning biomass creates pollution that causes a sweeping array of health harms ..." that primarily affect the young, the old, and people with heart and respiratory illnesses, in other words, the most vulnerable among us.

I do not fault our county officials for wanting to entice industries into our counties. The jobs and tax revenue can help everyone, but we do not have to be the dumping ground for other area's waste.

Right now in Lavonia, a ten acre solar farm is being built, and near it plans are for a high tech furniture maker to build a massive plant. Travel on down Hwy 59 towards the intersection with Hwy 77, and just before the intersection, a large spec, industrial building is almost complete. Then past the intersection are two operating plants, one of which has just expanded, and another under construction that will employ over seven hundred, skilled workers. Our area is in an ideal location, having easy access to I-85 and being between Atlanta, Greenville, and Charlotte.

I do not know what remedies are available to the people affected by the two biomass plants in Madison and Franklin County, but I do know that their concerns should be treated with respect and that our public officials should be informed and held accountable when they fail to protect all the people in our communities.