

4-30-08

Sampson's Incentives for Dirty Air

Paying more for clean renewable energy makes good sense to almost everyone; giving incentives for dirty energy does not. Yet that is what the Sampson County Commissioners did last week when they increased a proposed incentive package by \$1 million to a total of \$2.5 million. Fibrowatt, a privately held Pennsylvania company that wants to burn poultry manure to generate electricity, would receive the money over a period of ten years.

If Fibrowatt follows through on its announced plant in Sampson County near the Duplin County town of Faison, Sampson County and its neighbors will receive more pollution than they would from an equivalent new coal-fired plant. It is difficult to imagine incentives for a new coal plant, so why did this company deserve \$2.5 million? Sampson County economic developers touted the plant's jobs - hauling and burning the manure - and the additional tax base. The financial benefits to neighboring communities are not so apparent through the haze.

Environmental and public health questions were ignored in Sampson County. We can only hope that our state's leaders in Raleigh will set strict limits on pollution from biomass burners like Fibrowatt. North Carolinians support clean renewable energy, and most agree that clean energy is worth the additional expense. As of now the cost of this plant will show up in our future power bills while a company in Pennsylvania will reap the profits. Unfortunately for us, the cost to public health and the environment will stay here in North Carolina.

David Mickey

Published May 9, 2008 in the Opinion Section of the Fayetteville Observer.