

Why is only written testimony accepted?

It appears that the Benton County Planning Department will be recommending that the Board of Commissioners block verbal testimony from opponents of the proposed landfill expansion.

After the Planning Commission denied, in a 6-0 decision, the proposed conditional use permit to expand the landfill, Republic Services filed an appeal to the Board of Commissioners. That appeal proceeding is currently stayed until March 21.

In an email exchange on Dec. 30, planning staff informed an interested party that only written testimony would be accepted during the appeal proceedings. That is contrary to Section 51.840(1) of the county development code, wherein it states that during an appeal hearing "Any person may appear and be heard."

And it is contrary to the county's commitment to meaningful public input. Repeated efforts to clarify the nature of the public input during the appeal proceedings have been unsuccessful.

Upon resumption of the appeal proceedings in this case, I am urging the Board of Commissioners to reject the planning department's efforts to deny interested parties the opportunity to provide verbal testimony in the appeal hearing.

Mark Yeager
Corvallis