

Falls rejects Elcon plan

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Four years of controversy over a proposed hazardous waste treatment facility in Falls culminated in a dramatic denial vote by the township board of supervisors Tuesday night, eliciting a rousing applause by an audience of hundreds who stayed until just before 10 p.m. to witness the moment.

It was apparent early in the more than three-hour meeting that the supervisors were not keen to the plan, brought by Elcon Recycling Services, as their questioning of the company's representatives was sharp and critical. Supervisor Jeffrey Dence led questioning late in the exchange, expressing concerns there wasn't enough room to put in an additional fire lane for emergency access.

Kim Freimuth, an attorney for Fox Rothschild representing Elcon, said the company would be "happy to resubmit plans" that fell in line with what the supervisors wanted to see. She said Elcon had only

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that day and on Monday received additional comments from the township, and wanted a "good faith" opportunity to respond to them.

"I don't think your site fits in this space, is what my comment is," Dence retorted.

Shortly after, supervisor Jeff Boraski interrupted the meeting to make a motion to deny the application. But solicitor Michael Clarke chimed in to say the law first required public comment, leading to two hours of testimony from scores of residents and environmental groups, none of whom spoke in favor of the project.

Questioning from Falls supervisors and the township's professional staff made it clear they took specific issues with Elcon's presented plans. The plans call for the processing of between 150,000 to 210,000 tons

of chemicals,  ceutical waste each year, according to the company's past filings. The company aims to build the facility on a 23-acre site in the Keystone Industrial Port Complex, an approximately 3,000-acre industrial park encompassing the former footprint of U.S. Steel's Fairless Works operation. Elcon representatives say its facility would be state of the art and create up to 120 short-term construction jobs and about 50 full-time operations jobs. The company has said the plant would produce little pollution and adhere to all environmental regulations. Opponents, primarily made up of local residents and backed by local environmental groups, are skeptical.

Falls officials also raised concerns over access for emergency vehicles, exit routes for workers in the event of an emergency, potential pitfalls in the facility's spill containment measures, and other issues. One of the more pointed critiques was that Elcon

BACK TO TOP o bring in about 5,000 trucks with 70,000 cubic yards of soil fill to raise the footprint of the facility above the floodplain, something they suggested that the zoning code discourages.

After the vote to deny, supervisor chairman Robert Harvie, Jr. noted the Department of Environmental Protection still has its own review of Elcon's applications and doesn't have to take into account the township's decision, although he said he hoped it would. It also remains to be seen whether Elcon will appeal the township's decision; representatives left the room before the conclusion of the full meeting, which closed with other township business.

John Brodowski, deputy mayor of Bordentown City in New Jersey, which has also opposed the plan, used his public comment to discourage the company from doing so.

"Respect the decision," Brodowski said. "Let's not drag this out with lawsuit after lawsuit."