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Residents protest waste site

ENNIS (AP) — Residents fear their town's reputation for folksy charm will be tainted by a proposed plan for daily incineration of up to 24 tons of waste from hospitals, such as body parts and used surgical instruments.

Residents say the plan has sparked the biggest fury in years in Ennis, a community located 30 miles south of Dallas and known for its national polka festival.

"This could spell the downfall of the city of Ennis," said Ron Haskove, a town native.

City Manager Steve Howerton was forced to schedule a second meeting last Thursday night when more than 300 people came forward to discuss a California company's proposal to incinerate wastes from hospitals up to 150 miles away.

Residents fear the facility would pose health risks, decrease property values and discourage new businesses from locating in Ennis.

"It has them frightened that some of the parts are going to be diseased," said Bob Klemp, editor of the *Ennis Daily News*. "They're scared of the smell."

The plant, which would be owned by Winfield Environmental Inc. of San Diego, could open in about three months following a \$750,000 renovation, said Troy Mitchell, Winfield's director of facilities and operations.

Howerton said the city would get only \$2,000 to \$3,000 in tax revenue from the plant, which would employ 15 people. State officials maintain the plant would meet all safety requirements.

Some residents say medical waste from other towns and cities has no place in Ennis.

Some residents are concerned that the facility would dispose of aborted fetuses. Howerton said he asked the company for assurances that wouldn't happen, but company officials could not guarantee it.



The Coffee Achievers

Chris Morgan and Debbie Wicke, both juniors, wake up with hot coffee Wednesday morning. The two were relaxing inside while they wait Wednesday's rain to subside.

'Love prevails' during rape trial; woman marries alleged attacker

HOUSTON (AP) — A woman withdrew a charge of rape against a man and then was married to him by the judge who had been scheduled to preside over his trial.

State District Judge Woody Densen, saying that "love has prevailed," dismissed the charge against Ramon Vargas Tuesday and then performed the marriage ceremony in Spanish, waiving the usual \$25 fee.

Vargas, clad in a jail jumpsuit, married Natalia Benites about a month after the 21-year-old woman claimed he attacked her in a field after offering her a ride home from a bar.

After a demure kiss, the two Mexican nationals left, with Vargas returning to his jail cell to await his official release. He was freed later that night.

Benites, who does not speak English, told a translator she had known Vargas, 20, for about a year and had been dating him about three months at the time of the alleged assault.

The romance between the pair had blossomed through letters and telephone calls since Vargas was arrested Nov. 8, said defense lawyer Rachel Capote.

Vargas had been in jail since his arrest.

"He asked her on the phone if she'd marry him, and she agreed," Capote said.

Prosecutor Beth McGregor said she was astounded when the woman announced her intention to marry Vargas.

The wedding was "the first thing I've even seen," she said.

The prosecutor said she thought the bride was dropping the charge.

"But I do think there is more to this than any of us will ever know," McGregor said.

She said she asked through a translator if she loved Vargas.

"She just giggled," she said.

The newlyweds are living in this country, Capote said, and Vargas has been here for some time and is eligible for amnesty under new federal immigration laws.

East Texas police force probe closes without sufficient proof to prosecute

HENDERSON (AP) — An investigation into alleged wrongdoing in the Henderson Police Department uncovered evidence of misdemeanor crimes, but not enough evidence to prosecute in court, a prosecutor says.

Rusk County District Attorney William Ferguson said the nine-month investigation by the state attorney general's office was closed Tuesday, and based upon the report, no action will be taken.

"In view of this, I am closing our files in this matter and sincerely hope that the law enforcement officers will, in the future, devote all their efforts to protecting the lives and property of their fellow citizens," Ferguson said Tuesday.

Ferguson would not name specific people involved in the investigation or their alleged wrongdoings.

He also refused to make the 50-page report public.

The allegations involved policy and bookkeeping, and Police Chief Randy Freeman plans to re-write his department's policy manual and make some unspecified changes, Ferguson said.

An independent investigation into the department was requested in March after rumors of misconduct surfaced, Ferguson said.

David Hess, an investigator for the attorney general's office, said the probe lasted longer than he wanted because "we had trouble chasing down some elusive leads, none of which came to any kind of fruition."

"We're unable to prove that anything has occurred in a court of law," he said.

Hess would not say how many people were investigated.

Ferguson said the probe followed the January 1986 reinstatement of Assistant Police Chief David Tension and secret tapings of conversations between a detective and Ferguson and between City Council members Lavern Gibson and Lee Allen.

Ferguson said he also recently learned of secretly taped telephone conversations between members of

his staff and members of the department.

The tapings were broken into, Ferguson said.

But the district attorney says the burglary was related to department problems.

Freeman, who has been in court for little more than a week, comment, saying he had to study the report.

Judge gives go-ahead for clearing forest

HOUSTON (AP) — A federal judge Wednesday gave the U.S. Forest Service the go-ahead for its controversial plan to burn and clear parts of the Sam Houston National Forest infested by pine beetles.

"It is clear there are different opinions, all apparently scientifically sound," U.S. District Judge Lynn N. Hughes said of the witnesses testifying in the two-day hearing.

"The forest service considered seriously sound advice," the judge said. "Having considered the advice, they made a choice. It wasn't the only choice, but it was a legal choice."

Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox filed suit last month, seeking to stop the clearing operation until the forest service did an environmental study of the project.

The forest service now does not need to conduct a study, said Assistant Attorney General Robert...

who handled the case for the state.

Mike Lannan, forest service spokesman, said the ruling didn't surprise him.

"I felt that scientifically and by law we were doing the best forestry," Lannan said, adding that weather permitting, the best service will resume clearing the Four Notch area of the forest in Huntsville.

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