

Goodrich unit OK urged by examiner

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Post Environment Writer

A state hearing examiner is recommending that the Texas Air Control Board approve construction of a \$180 million B.F. Goodrich chemical plant in Bayport.

Several Galveston Bay communities and civic groups bitterly opposed the new plant in a record five-week hearing that ended March 7.

But the hearing examiner, John E. Turney, concluded in a report made public Tuesday that the plant would pose no air pollution hazard to nearby residents.

Turney, however, noted the plant is unusually close to residential areas and will emit some potentially hazardous pollutants.

He said the air board, therefore, could reasonably conclude that the plant does not meet the intent of the Texas Clean Air Act, and could refuse to issue construction permits.

The act directs the air board to consider land use in licensing new industrial plants. Opponents of the Goodrich plant contend the board's land use policy is too limited to comply with the law.

Turney said he expects a final ruling on the Goodrich case by the air board at its next meeting May 15.

His hearing report said the plant site is in a designated industrial district created by the City of Pasadena. The plant, east of Texas 161 and south of the Bayport Turning Basin, will produce ethylene dichloride, chlorine and caustic soda.

Turney said the plant will comply with

all state and federal air pollution standards.

Although some expert defense witnesses testified to the contrary, the hearing examiner concluded the plant will use the best available pollution controls that are economically reasonable.

The plant will emit barely measurable amounts of chlorine, carbon tetrachloride, ethylene dichloride and ammonia—all considered potentially hazardous pollutants.

But Goodrich medical witnesses said the maximum emissions in normal operations will be far too small to affect public health.

Turney's report noted that a major concern of the plant's opponents is a possible massive release of toxic pollutants during a plant accident or a natural catastrophe such as a hurricane.

But the hearing examiner concluded Goodrich has taken reasonable engineering precautions against natural and accidental disasters.

Meanwhile, a civil suit has been filed in Austin district court challenging Feb. 24 decision by the air board to permit construction of another Bayport chemical plant.

That plant is being built by the American Hoechst Corp. next to the proposed Goodrich plant.

The suit was filed by the Galveston Bay Conservation and Preservation Association, which also was a leading opponent of the Goodrich plant.

The suit alleges the air board improperly issued the permits and ignored land use considerations.

FYI:

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