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County makes changes at EcoComplex

By Sharon McBrayer

Catawba County got word Monday that it is one of two counties that will receive \$30,000 for wireless broadband. Lee Worsley, assistant county manager, told the Catawba County Board of Commissioners on Monday night about the grant money. The money would be used to help get data from the county's EcoComplex to researchers at universities and to remotely monitor equipment at the site, said Barry Edwards, director of utilities and engineering for the county. The county EcoComplex is, in essence, a big recycling complex that turns trash or waste into a commodity, say officials. The complex is located on 800 acres located on Rocky Ford Road.

On Monday, commissioners agreed to terminate its contract early for methane gas service with Catawba Landfill Gas and Newton Landfill Gas.

The cost of terminating the contracts is \$415,000.

The move will save the county a little more than \$315,000, Edwards told commissioners, because the contract payments would cost \$730,315, according to information from the county. The contracts were due to end October 2013. Through early termination, the contracts were to end June 2010, officials say.

Buying out the contracts will be beneficial to the expansion of the EcoComplex, Edwards said, and it will create more flexibility of the operation and will help bundle operations at the EcoComplex for improved efficiency.

The county will take over the operation, maintenance and any construction related to the methane gas collection wells.

The collection wells generate enough electricity to power about 1,500 homes, Edwards said.

Commissioners also agreed to amend the 2010-11 fiscal budget to spend \$100,000 to meet future state air quality regulations. The new regulations are part of the monitoring and reporting of Mandatory Reporting of Greenhouse Gases sources, according to information from the county.

No taxpayer money will be used to buy out the contracts, he said. The money will come from the county's solid waste enterprise fund, he said.

In other business, commissioners:

n Approved a request to rezone .86 acres from Residential to Rural Commercial-Conditional District to make way for a new convenience store. The site at the corner of Sulphur Springs Road and Snow Creek Road.

The convenience store plans call for the building to be 2,800 square feet and cannot exceed 3,360 square feet, according to information from the county. Store hours will be from 5:30 a.m. to midnight, county officials say.

n Approved a request to rezone 5.19 acres from Highway Commercial to Residential on N.C. 150. The property, which is part of the county's Sherrills Ford Small Area Plan, is part of a plan that designates 750 acres as a village center. A village center would have a mix of commercial, office and residential uses, according to information from the county.