

# THE GAFFNEY LEDGER

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## Peeler confident he can sell landfill concept



**Bob Peeler ...Waste Management Inc.'s point man**

When he was lieutenant governor in the 1990s, he initiated an audit to streamline government spending.

Today, he is spearheading an effort as the point man for Waste Management to win approval from Cherokee County Council for the construction of a controversial landfill and single-stream recycling center on a 1,550-acre site in the McKowns Mountain community.

Peeler is confident he'll do just that.

"I think (council) will agree it's a good economic development project for the county," said Peeler in an appearance Monday before the Cherokee County Development Board.

The development board typically makes recommendations on tax breaks for projects. But Peeler said he wasn't seeking tax incentives. Rather, his job is to present the facts about the 3Cycle Environmental Management Center.

The stakes are high for both Peeler and the county.

Waste Management wants to invest as much as \$150 million in what the company calls a first-of-its-kind center. County officials could realize a financial windfall of \$500,000 a year in property taxes and roughly \$2 million more in tipping fees but lose the support and confidence of the likely thousands of county residents who oppose the project.

Naturally, Peeler touted the project's huge economic impact to the development board members.

As many as 300 jobs would be created during the construction phase of the project, he said. Another 42 full-time workers would be hired when the project becomes operational some time in 2011, according to Peeler.

The jobs — which include a local manager, a couple of supervisors, equipment operators, sorters, mechanics and forklift operators — would also put good money in the workers' pockets.

Peeler said the center would complement Duke Power's proposed nearby nuclear power station and would be an aid to other local environmentallyfriendly companies.

"The goal is to have less and less in disposal and more and more in recycling," Peeler said. "This would put (the county) on the cutting edge to do that."

Development Board vicechairman Jim Cudd asked about the heavy truck traffic the center would bring.

Randall Essick, senior manager for business development with Waste Management, said about 300 rearload and tractor trailer trucks a day would enter and exit the center.

"The biggest obstacle is the truck traffic," Essick said.

But Essick contends additional truck traffic would result from any large economic development project, such as a distribution center.

Jim Cook, development board director, noted the project would change a community already bracing for the construction of a nuclear power station.

Essick said the site was chosen because it had the necessary acreage, which will include 1,000 acres of buffer.

Other board members questioned the Waste Management officials that the facility would collect, process and recycle refuse from a proposed 75-mile radius around McKowns Mountain.

Peeler said that radius makes the project financially feasible for the company, and he vowed that not "one drop of garbage would be brought in by rail."

"Waste Management is a good company and it has good people," Peeler said.

To illustrate that point, Waste Management is willing to help the six or seven households on Patrick Road which are most affected by the project to relocate.

One resident has taken Waste Management up on the offer.

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