

Houff Corporation speaks to readers about waste pit proposal, decision to pull it: Letter

TIM GROVE
Weyers Cave

Members of the community, neighbors and friends:

For over 30 years, Houff Corporation has been a part of the infrastructure serving the food and beverage manufacturing industry in the Valley. We recycle the solids reclaimed through wastewater treatment at area food processors as fertilizer for crops grown on farms in Rockingham, Augusta and Rockbridge counties. The companies we serve operate daily, so during times where weather or soil conditions keep us from land applying, we store the material until field conditions allow us to spread again.

As our Valley food industries have grown, so have our needs for more application fields and occasionally more storage capacity. That growth has pushed us to recently consider construction of a storage facility near Churchville. The process of this development first requires a special use permit by the county Board of Zoning Appeals, then permit approval by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality.

Readers of this paper know that our proposal has been met with varying levels of concern among those in the Churchville community. Where prior experience permitting these types of facilities has been successful using letters to neighbors, open lines of communication and transparency to our operations, today's society demands more. Communities today ask to be

included more broadly than just among adjoining residents, and they desire participation earlier in the process.

It has become clear that though we are confident of the environmental soundness of the proposal, and of our alignment with regulations, the project has fallen short of our desire to work with the community instead of against it. To proceed further with the application would only result in strained relations between our company and the community. That is not the type of company we strive to be, nor the type of community relationship we desire.

To that end, on Monday, Jan. 24, Houff Corporation officially withdrew the permit application with the Augusta County BZA.

We look forward to continuing our service to the Valley's food industry through our land application program, and to ever-improving our relationships in the communities we serve.

TIM GROVE, general manager, Houff Corporation

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