

City gives thumbs down to Nestlé

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By [Kevin Hanson](#)

Perhaps the shortest committee meeting in Enumclaw City Council history had a packed house cheering and clapping.

An ad hoc committee of the council had been appointed to study a proposal that would allow the giant Nestlé corporation to draw Enumclaw's natural spring water and build a bottling plant in the city.

After a quick review of the proposal during a Thursday committee meeting, Mark Bauer dropped a bombshell.

"We can find no support for the proposal in the community," he said, so City Hall was recommending that the idea be dropped.

That's when the standing-room-only crowd burst into applause.

Councilman Kevin Mahelona concurred. "I don't think the council should spend time on it," he said, when there appeared to be so little support from the public.

Councilman Jeff Beckwith's comments weren't received quite as well, but his hesitancy was lost in the crowd's excitement.

"I'm probably not going to get any applause," he said, noting that he remained "50-50" on the proposal.

Beckwith said he had hoped the city would continue looking at the idea and gathering information. "Although I wish we were moving forward, I understand the reality," he said, deferring to the suggestion from city administration.

With that, councilman and committee chairman Mike Ennis said the committee would recommend to the rest of the council that the Nestlé idea be scrapped and the ad hoc committee dissolved.

That action was expected to take place at Monday night's council meeting. The meeting came after press deadlines.

One person who wasn't cheering Thursday night was Dave Palais, Nestlé's California-based natural resource manager.

Palais later noted his disappointment with the city's decision. The brief, but emotionally-charged, relationship between Nestlé and Enumclaw began last fall

when the international corporation - which is responsible for product lines ranging from candy bars to pet food - approached the city, asking about the pristine water bubbling from Boise Spring.

For the city, Boise Spring is one source of water for the municipal supply.

Nestlé Waters North America is the No. 1 provider of bottled water in each of its identified markets. In this region, it bottles water under the Arrowhead label. And, while the company has facilities across North America, it has none in the Pacific Northwest.

Nestle floated a proposal in which the company would draw about 100 million gallons of water annually from Boise Spring and direct it to a bottling plant to be built in town. The plant, it was said, would be home to about 45 employees and operate 24 hours a day. Up to 120 trucks would pass through town daily to deliver the bottled water to market.

Bauer said city officials had talked with citizens face-to-face, on the phone and via e-mail and found support for the plan sorely lacking.

While disappointed that Enumclaw is no longer in the mix, Nestl isn't abandoning its plan for a Pacific Northwest facility, Palais said.

“We’re looking at a number of locations,” he said, noting that he'll soon be making a pitch before the Orting City Council.

[Kevin Hanson](mailto:khanson@courierherald.com) can be reached at khanson@courierherald.com.