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Standing-room-only crowd gathers at Richland County Detention Center to discuss large hog farm

drew a large crowd Tuesday to the meeting room at Richland County Detention Center. Loren Dickirson, of Sumner, made the request to Illinois Department of Agriculture last month for the facility and Patrick Maschhoff signed the application on behalf of Dickirson. Richland County Board briefl...
















Kevin Ryden

Berryville Vineyards owner Eric Pool asks a question Tuesday during an informational meeting about a proposed hog operation in Berryville. The meeting, which was requested by Richland County Board and was conducted by Illinois Department of Agriculture, was held in the meeting room at Richland County Detention Center.

By Kevin Ryden
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Olney, Ill. —

A meeting to discuss a proposed hog livestock-management facility in the county drew a large

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crowd Tuesday to the meeting room at Richland County Detention Center.

Loren Dickirson, of Sumner, made the request to Illinois Department of Agriculture last month for the facility and Patrick Maschhoff signed the application on behalf of Dickirson. Richland County Board briefly discussed the issue at its monthly meeting June 14.

Nearly every seat was taken and many people had to stand, including some who stood in the hallway just outside the meeting room. The meeting, which lasted a little more than three hours, was conducted by Illinois Department of Agriculture and featured presentations by the department and Dickirson, a question-and-answer session and public testimony by the public. At the end of the meeting, written testimony was turned over to Illinois Department of Agriculture.

Richland County Board, which requested the meeting take place, has until Aug. 21 to submit a non-binding recommendation to Illinois Department of Agriculture regarding the proposed facility.

Opponents of the facility had questions about odor, how it might affect the water supply, semi-trailer traffic and other possible effects. There were also several supporters, including some who have hog operations of their own and some who live near such facilities.

The facility is proposed to be 2.4 miles northeast of Berryville. It is planned to be 81 feet by 225 feet with a maximum design of 1,132.2 animal units and 2,830 head of swine. The minimum setback distance the facility can be is one-fourth of a mile from an occupied residence and half a mile from a populated area. Illinois Department of Agriculture has received detailed information of the proposed facility but has not made final decision on construction, said Warren Goach, Illinois Department of Agriculture bureau chief of Environmental Programs.

The facility must meet a variety of criteria in order to be approved. Dickirson, who is contracting with the Maschhoffs, said that by diversifying his farm operation, he can preserve his family farm and ensure its economic viability. He said there have been innovations in agriculture technology to meet the needs of consumers. He said one of the innovations was to bring hogs inside facilities.

"All livestock farmers have an obligation to be responsible and caring neighbors," he said. "This includes protecting our natural resources in which we, the farmers, our neighbors and the generations to come all depend on. This is a priority for Illinois farmers like me." He said he will "ensure that environmental protection is a high priority and will be achieved on my farm."

The facility will be governed by the Illinois Livestock Management Act, he said. Dickirson will own and operate the farm and the Maschhoffs will provide the hogs while Dickirson will provide the care for them. The hogs will come to the facility at 15 pounds and will be raised to market rate at 280 pounds over a six-month period.

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