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Board OKs water allocation plan

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A majority of Union County commissioners passed a county plan for dividing up limited water resources Monday, despite staunch opposition from two board members.

The policy will distribute Union's 20 million gallons of water capacity per day among new and existing projects, weeks after a number of locals blasted the plan as unfairly favoring new development over current county residents.

Board Vice Chairman Kevin Pressley called it a "middle-of-the-road" compromise for pro-growth and anti-growth county groups by splitting resources between future developments and current customers. Allan Baucom, Parker Mills and Pressley voted to approve while Lanny Openshaw and Roger Lane called for further revision in the six-month process.

Openshaw suggested Baucom did not take an "in-depth" look at the policy before signing off.

"I had so many comments (on the plan) I had to write them in the margin," Openshaw said, adding that some commissioners listened more to project architects than angry residents.

Baucom, who bundled the policy with a citizens' education component on water conservation, said the plan gives Union County a direction for divvying up its limited capacity.

The motion included a mandate that county officials draw up a conservation plan for the at-times overburdened system in the next 45 days.

Lane said the county should have its water-saving plan implemented before an allocation policy is passed.

"I think we're putting the cart before the horse," he said.

But Mills said the policy is a working document that will change as the county grows in the coming years.

"It's not perfect by any means, but it's a start," he said.

Pressley showed up to cast the tie-breaking vote Monday, despite spending the day bed-ridden with a fever.