

# Opponents may file suit over new plant site

By VICKI FERSTEL  
River parishes bureau

EDGARD — Environmentalists may file suit in order to get St. John the Baptist Parish officials to reconsider their decision on a controversial rezoning change requested by Formosa Plastics Corp.

Parish planning and zoning commissioners voted unanimously Monday to recommend to the Parish Council that the 800-acre Whitney Plantation near the St. John and St. James parishes' border in Wallace be rezoned to industrial use.

Formosa Plastics requested the zoning change — most of the plantation is zoned residential — so it can build a proposed \$2 billion rayon plant and petrochemical complex at the site.

The Parish Council will take up the controversial issue at its April 19 meeting.

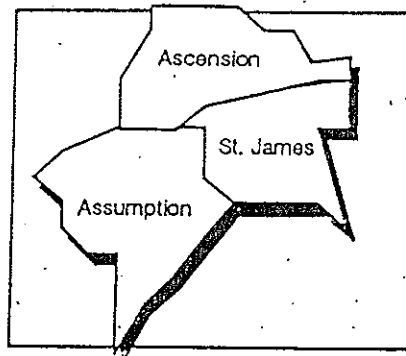
Audrey Evans of the Tulane Environmental Law Clinic told the commissioners Monday that they were bound by the state constitution to consider environmental effects before making such a decision.

The parish planning and zoning codes also enable the commission to request a company to provide such information at its own cost.

Evans said the opponents have not decided if they will wait until the Parish Council makes its decision before filing suit. She said it's possible that other opponents may file separate lawsuits.

Residents of Wallace and Vacherie on the west bank of the Mississippi River in both St. John and St. James parishes, preservationists and environmentalists have opposed the project, which received support from Gov. Buddy Roemer and other parish officials.

Project supporters cited the 515 permanent jobs and other economic



## RIVER PARISHES

impact.

Formosa officials promised to meet all state and federal environmental requirements and promised to donate the plantation house and 5.6 acres to the parish, which will donate the aging structure to a historical association for preservation.

The loudest protest came from Carl Baloney Sr. of Garyville, who spoke Monday on behalf of the black residents of Wallace.

"I'm an ungrateful nigger," Baloney sneered at the white supporters of a project proposed for a majority black community.

"I've got relatives buried there," Baloney said. "You are going to desecrate our land."

Baloney called on the three black members of the planning and zoning commission to vote against the project. He claimed all the commissioners had their minds made up before the public hearings.

"These people are only carrying out the whim of the governor," said Baloney. "From conception, this whole thing has been deception."