

**By John Avise**

## Sign of the times: opposition to 3M incinerator cropping up in CG yards

150 signs reading "Neighbors Against the Burner" began appearing in front lawns over the weekend and group protests incinerator plan before Wednesday's city council meeting

Green signs are popping up around Cottage Grove as a citizens group continues its fight against a 3M proposal they say will cause environmental harm in the city. Signs protesting the 3M plan to burn hazardous waste from outside the company at its Cottage Grove incinerator have begun sprouting up on lawns across town — and appearing in the hands of demonstrators — as company officials and city leaders try to hash out an agreement on air monitoring.

A group that has vocally opposed the 3M plan, the Coalition of Concerned Cottage Grove Citizens, paid for the roughly 150 signs reading "Neighbors Against the Burner," that began appearing in front lawns over the weekend. The signs were purchased from an unaffiliated St. Paul group opposed to a proposed garbage burner there.

More than 30 residents also showed up at Cottage Grove City Hall before Wednesday's council meeting, green signs in-hand, to rally against the incinerator plan. Passing drivers honked as the group picketed along 80th Street and gathered near the front doors of city hall, forcing council members and city officials to pass through on their way inside.

Former Cottage Grove mayor and coalition member Sandy Shiely said the signs show widespread opposition to the 3M plan. "It shows the concerns about this issue are citywide," Shiely said. "It's not just a small group of people. There's maybe been an effort to paint this as a small group of disgruntled people. The most important thing is this indicates that the concerns are larger than that."

3M and city officials have been engaged in talks over ambient air monitoring near the 3M corporate incinerator that currently burns 3M hazardous waste from across North America, but that company officials hope to soon begin accepting waste from an outside source. The city wants to install an air monitor near the 3M Cottage Grove plant through a private company, with 3M footing the bill, in return for dropping its opposition to modifications to the incinerator's pollution control permits to allow the outside waste.

The coalition, though, says it is still opposed to any outside hazardous waste being burned in Cottage Grove, Shiely said. She said she hopes the group, which has been excluded from negotiations thus far, will be included at the table during future talks. She called the coalition's exclusion from the discussions "frustrating."

"I think the process would be better served if the coalition was included," she said.