

Letter: NIMBY is good thing, and NIABY is better

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By Alan Muller from Red Wing on Apr 15, 2016 at 6:00 a.m.

To the Editor:

In an April 5 [letter](#), Mark Walsworth says he wants to “correct a quotation error in Alan Muller’s [letter](#) (of March 30).” I think Mr. Walsworth is writing about the Planning Commission meeting of March 15, which I did not attend, while I was writing about the Sustainability Commission meeting of March 22, which I did attend.

In any event, I did not quote Mayor Bender at all, but I wish I had. Instead I offered this summary of Bender’s March 22 comments in my own words: “Bender said it was probably a good idea but not in his backyard.” Those are my words, not Benders’. If they sound a little snarky, I apologize. I reviewed the video to see if my summary was fair. Let readers decide (Bender’s comments begin at 31:30 into the video) here:

“I’m Dan Bender ... I’m here talking to you tonight as one of the residents in the neighborhood. When this started, when it was first introduced, I thought this could be a good thing, dig through the ash, get the metals out ... and it probably is, if you put it in the right place. I don’t believe that where it’s being put, considered to be put now, is the right place ... I’ve had many people talk to me about what they are going to do for suppression of noise and dust. ... during the transport of that ash. ... 24 trucks a day, and that is going to be a lot of noise, and potentially a lot of dust, and I have not heard an explanation of how that is going to be contained. ... A few years ago Xcel decided to expand that landfill and we as a neighborhood were very concerned ... They’ve done a pretty good job of keeping it clean, and it’s not particularly dusty. There is more noise. ... How much more are we expected to get used to? That is the question. And I think this is just a step too far for that neighborhood.”

Nothing that Bender said seems in any way incorrect or objectionable to me. He and his neighbors are right to be concerned. The referral to the Sustainability Commission was a good idea.

But, as Bender notes, he was speaking for himself and his neighbors, not for the interests of the city or its residents as a whole. Who is doing that?

NIMBY (“Not in My Back Yard”) is a term cooked up by industrial interests to marginalize and ridicule people concerned about the impacts of undesirable facilities such as incinerators, dumps, and refineries on their neighborhoods.

NIMBY is not bad. NIMBY is good.

But better is NIABY (“Not in Anyone’s Back Yard”).

Nobody in Red Wing, regardless of their economic level or place of residence, needs to be exposed to incinerator smokestack emissions or incinerator ash dust and toxins.

Alan Muller
Red Wing