In the wake of a retired judge’s decision to issue a permit for Waste Management’s proposed landfill at Cade, the many opponents of the project are gearing up again. A Waste Management official says construction on the project can start within the next several months, but a St. Martin Parish police juror says “no way.”

At press time, the Police Jury had scheduled a special meeting Tuesday night to discuss its legal options and possible courses of action, said Juror Thomas Nelson, who represents the area in which the landfill would be located. Nelson said it was likely that the Police Jury would join in a class action suit to stop the landfill. “The Parish is definitely going to fight it,” he said.

The proposed landfill was the subject of heated controversy a few years ago. Residents vehemently objected to the choice of site, saying it would cause environmental damage because it was directly above the Chicot Aquifer, which supplies drinking water to Acadiana. They also maintain that the site is in the natural path of development south of Lafayette—development which would be choked off by a landfill. The site is very near the Episcopal School of Acadia.

Waste Management officials said they took extraordinary precautions in planning the landfill to prevent environmental damage. Former Department of Environmental Quality Secretary Paul Templet was removed from the case by a court-appointed hearing officer. Waste Management had complained that he showed prejudice against the proposal in a comment made to Iberia Parish President Craig Romero.

Critics of the decision by retired appeals court Judge William Redman to issue the permit say the issue could not be fairly ruled on by a judge who was not an expert on solid waste issues, did not live in the area and was brought out of retirement to make the decision.

“The permit has been issued,” says Charles Lanphier, regional marketing director for Waste Management. The company intends to proceed with final engineering and building plans before taking construction bids. However, he notes that this is the worst time of the year because of the weather to begin dirt work.

For the past few years Waste Management has been transporting garbage from Lafayette, Iberia and St. Martin parishes to its landfill in Livingston Parish. Some waste haulers in rural areas are using a landfill in Jeff Davis Parish, Lanphier says.

All of that waste would go to the Cade landfill, Lanphier says. But he says it’s possible that waste might later be hauled from other parts of the state. New federal regulations governing landfills go into effect in October of 1993 and are strict enough that several Louisiana landfills might be forced to close, he says. The Cade plans exceed those new requirements, he says.

Lanphier says the Cade landfill could be open in six to 12 months. If a court challenge is attempted, he says, the plaintiffs would have to put up a hefty bond to obtain a stay of the permit issuance.

Nelson indicates that the Police Jury might be willing to do just that. Says Nelson, “There is no way construction can start, as far as I can see.”

—JANE NICHOLES