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## John W. Casella: Materials Management A Must For Economic, Environmental Sustainability

John W. Casella

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Bill Donahue's story in the latest issue of the Boston Globe Magazine, does an admirable job reporting on a number of regional waste and recycling challenges in the context of Casella's proposed landfill in northern New Hampshire.

Rather than try to answer all the questions surrounding this issue, however, the article shines a light on the complex system surrounding how we manage our waste and recycling regionally, and how we should build and manage the infrastructure we will collectively need in the future.

Years ago, this was not a complex issue. Virtually every town had its own "dump" that served as an easy throw-away destination for the townspeople's trash. Over time, it became apparent this was not a sustainable approach and, in fact, was a threat to environmental and public health. New environmental regulations encouraged recycling and mandated the closure of the old town dumps. Technology- and capital-intensive recycling facilities and lined landfills emerged as state-of-the-art alternatives, taking advantage of scale to help lessen the economic and environmental impacts.

Today, it's a complex issue without simple answers. The issue compels all of us to understand and balance a complicated system of public policy needs; regional and local prejudices; our drive for sustainability; and the way we make, consume, and dispose of the things we expect in our modern lifestyle. In fact, the next twenty years will be critical to finding higher and better uses of our waste stream and it will require the participation, creativity, and collaboration of every stakeholder.

Here in New England, this raises some important questions:

- Will New Hampshire policymakers elevate the development and integration of recycling infrastructure as part of a deliberate statewide resource management approach to help solve its dwindling disposal capacity?

- Will we collectively be able to bring multiple stakeholders together to address the challenge of getting PFAS and other “forever chemicals” out of how we manufacture and use a variety of products?
- Will Massachusetts shift away from a strategy that prohibits new disposal infrastructure that forces neighboring states to shoulder the responsibility for those choices?

In the meantime, Casella, having spent decades developing regional infrastructure, will continue to innovate and collaborate with others around modernizing its approach. Society rightfully demands that this be done in both an economically and environmentally sustainable way, and Casella understands that in today’s business climate you cannot achieve one without the other. Siting, permitting, building, and operating this vital infrastructure is costly and requires specific expertise in regulatory compliance and engineering. Addressing problems like PFAS, the growth of recycling, and the right amount of long-term disposal capacity requires regional thinking, coordination, and public and private resources.

Even in the face of these realities, as Mr. Donahue’s article points out, some will make the argument that waste and recycling should not cross borders, and that states like New Hampshire shouldn’t dispose of waste from Massachusetts.

The irony in this argument is that, at the same time, these same people are more than likely exporting their recyclables to facilities in Massachusetts and Vermont as New Hampshire currently lacks the necessary infrastructure and recycling laws to bring scale to their recycling programs.

Even if there were an argument to be made to move away from a regional approach to waste disposal and recycling, it seems curious to put Casella’s North Country Environmental Services (NCES) Landfill and its proposed Granite State Landfill (GSL) at the center of the debate. In 2022, NCES took in around 20,000 tons of out-of-state waste, which accounts for less than three percent of the nearly one million tons of out-of-state waste that New Hampshire imports. Also worth noting is that a vast majority of the out-of-state waste that NCES accepts is beneficial use material which prevents the use of New Hampshire’s natural resources for purposes such as landfill cover. The picture being painted of hundreds of thousands of tons of household trash from other states pouring into the NCES landfill is inaccurate.

Finally, many readers of the Globe may be left wondering why Casella would sue the Town of Bethlehem over something like taxes. Casella is willing to pay its fair share of property taxes. In fact, the company paid \$778,600 in host community fees, taxes, and other benefits in the State of New Hampshire in 2021. The missing context, that readers deserve to have, is that Casella experienced an increase in appraised value by the Town of Bethlehem that resulted in an increase in taxes equal to 4,700%.

Ultimately, we applaud Mr. Donahue's efforts to shine a light on these issues, and for telling more than one side of the story. Modern materials management is a complex industry and we're proud of the infrastructure we've invested in and the people who provide their expertise to servicing our customers while protecting human health and the natural environment.

*John W. Casella is chairman & CEO of Casella Waste Systems, Inc.*