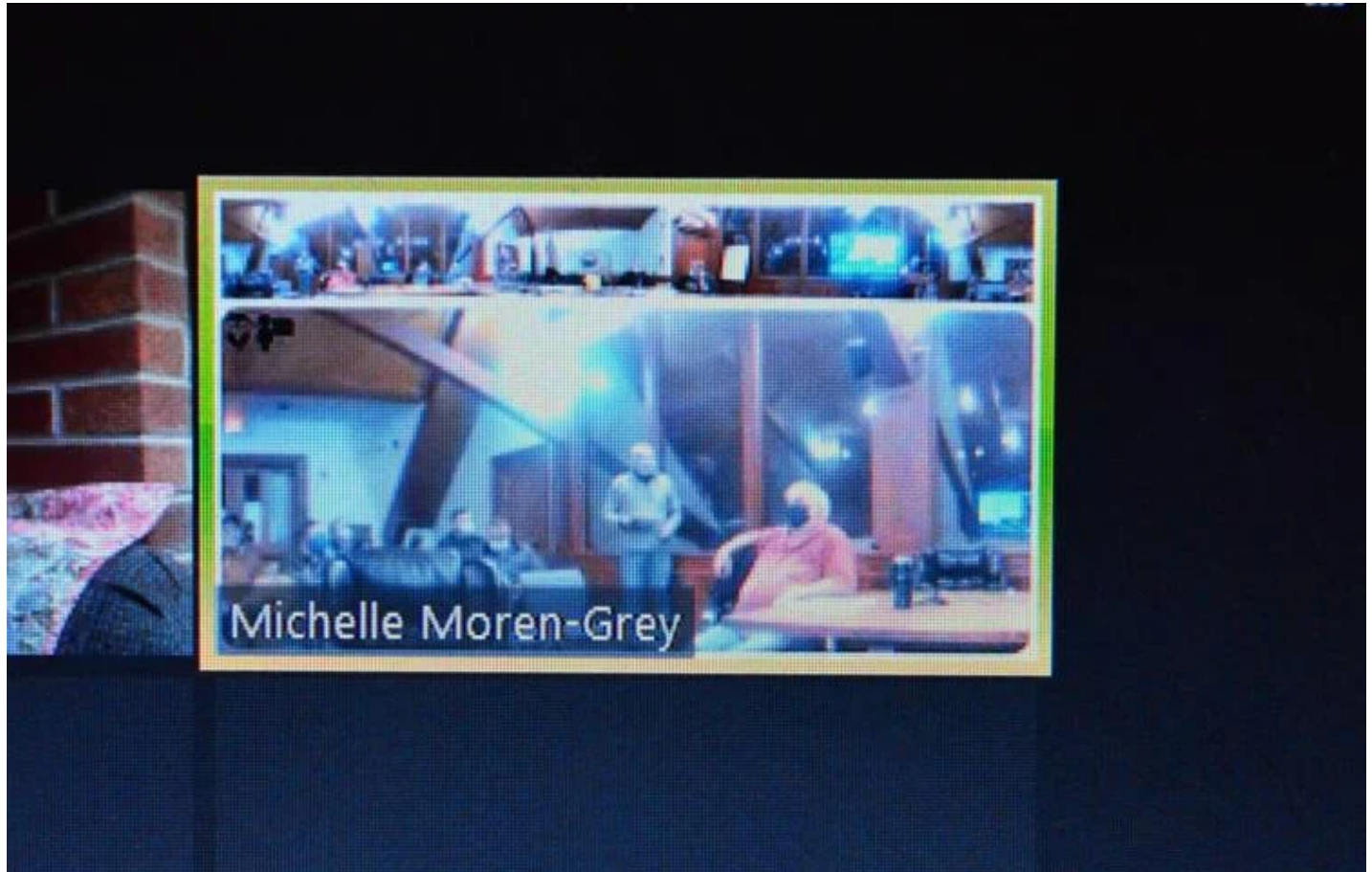


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## North Country Residents Turn Up Spotlight On Out-Of-State Trash

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Wayne Morrison, center, of Whitefield, speaks Wednesday before the board members of the Pemi-Baker Solid Waste District on the reasons for the opposition to the proposed landfill in Dalton. Presenting different views was Kevin Roy, division manager for Casella Waste Systems.

To the board members of the Pemi-Baker Solid Waste District (PBSWD), which covers a number of northern Grafton County towns, some local residents are voicing concerns about the amount of out-of-state trash brought into New Hampshire.

On Wednesday at Plymouth Town Hall, with a remote meeting option available, Kevin Roy, division manager for North Country Environmental Services, Casella Waste Systems' New Hampshire subsidiary, gave the status of the NCES landfill in Bethlehem — which is projected to reach capacity

and close at the end of 2026 — and spoke of upcoming regarding Casella's proposed landfill in Dalton.

“There's a flurry of legislation related to solid waste in New Hampshire, more than typical,” said Roy. “There are several bills being presented that will attempt again to either stall or stop the permitting process of the Dalton project.”

Bills include prohibiting new landfills within close proximity to state parks, such as Casella's proposal beside Forest Lake State Park, and prohibiting any new landfills in New Hampshire until the state updates its solid waste management plan, which hasn't been updated since 2003.

The state's solid waste working committee, formed out of a law passed in 2020, is rewriting solid waste rules and looking at such things as waste diversion, one of several options that are out there, as there should be, said Roy.

“It's an exciting year for solid waste and everybody is paying attention,” he said. “It seems today there are a lot of people who know more about waste than we do, but we deal with it every day. We know what the issues are, we have tried to solve the issues, and I think together we can continue to move forward ... But we have to literally pay attention. There are people who really do not know our industry like we do.”

NCES would be willing to extend its contract with the PBSWD through the end of the landfill life in Bethlehem, said Roy, who also spoke of a landfill capacity shortfall and trucking difficulties.

The PBSWD (which includes Easton, Franconia, Landaff, Lisbon, Littleton, Lyman and Sugar Hill) has a good price and transportation cost with NCES, but in 2026 things could change drastically, and the distance to another facility would be longer, he said.

“If you kick us out of the marketplace, the prices are going to change, said Roy. “Once more capacity goes off line, all of those dynamics change.”

Contesting some of Roy's statements before the PBSWD was Wayne Morrison, a resident of Whitefield and member of the North Country Alliance For Balanced Change.

“We want to let you know there's a great deal of opposition to the Dalton project,” he said.

That opposition is not only specific to the proposed site, but is also a recognition that New Hampshire is lagging compared to other New England states in updating its solid waste management plan, he said.

While Roy said some people don't know a lot about solid waste, Morrison said he's learned much the last few years.

"There's a reason why there's so much opposition to this specific project, and that's siting a landfill next to a lake and state park and pristine place that represents so much of what New Hampshire is all about," he said. "We think it's an unnecessary risk."

Although there is a need for landfill capacity, the capacity crisis is of the companies' own making, said Morrison.

"Some of the for-profit companies are driving in out-of-state trash into our landfills to the extent that now more than half the trash going into some of our landfills is coming from out of state," he said. "The truth is there's no capacity issue with New Hampshire trash. It's only a problem because they're bringing it up [Interstate] 93."

In a notice to Dalton abutters in February, Casella representatives said up to half the waste transported to a Dalton facility during several decades could be from out of state.

Although NCES is projected to close in 2026, that challenge also presents an opportunity, said Morrison.

"This is an opportunity for us to step back," he said. "There's not a crisis. There's expansion going on at other sites. We do not have to sacrifice pristine forests and wetlands in New Hampshire to satisfy contracts with other states. This is an opportunity to make a change in the way that we're doing business with our landfills in New Hampshire. As a resident, this is in some ways a generational decision that's being made. If the landfill goes through in Dalton, we are going to live with that decision for 40, 50, maybe 100 years if there's expansion ... We need to do what's best for New Hampshire, not what's best for Casella."

Morrison said one of the first questions he was asked when he became involved in the landfill fight is the Interstate Commerce Clause, which some have argued cannot prohibit out-of-state trash.

“I think what other states have done is say that may be true if you have private, for-profit companies operating landfills,” he said. “But Maine, Vermont, and some other states have said, ‘Okay, maybe it’s time for municipalities to run those landfills.’”

The Commerce Clause might be an obstacle, but it isn’t something that can’t be overcome, and New Hampshire is behind other states when it follows rules and regulations that are 20 years or older, he said.

Morrison also took aim at Roy’s statement about costs increasing if transporting to a landfill farther away from Dalton, or from Bethlehem, after NCES closes.

“Somehow, the economics seem to work when they ship it hundreds of miles up from Massachusetts and find a home for it in the White Mountains,” said Morrison. “If we allow [a landfill in Dalton] to happen, we’re going to be a magnet that’s going to suck in trash from all over New England. We don’t want that. We don’t need that. There are other solutions.”

Agreeing was state Rep. Joyce Weston, D-Plymouth, who said the whole system in New Hampshire needs to change.

“We should not be having an out-of-state company making money off bringing out-of-state trash to dump here,” she said. “It just doesn’t make sense. This has been brought up in the Legislature before, but we haven’t been able to change it yet. In the meantime, there are a number of pieces of legislation to divert waste ... I agree totally that the state needs to think about why we want to be the depository for all the waste in the entire New England area.”

Whitefield resident and NCABC member, Sarah Doucette said a landfill in Dalton would be in the watershed of the Ammonoosuc River, which flows to Littleton just a few miles away.

Whitefield is expected to see 100 trash-hauling vehicles a day coming in and the same amount going out, and that doesn’t count the leachate tankers, she said.

“My village would be utterly devastated if this project goes through,” said Doucette. “There’s a lot at stake. I look forward to this conversation continuing statewide. North to south, we will all be impacted if this project proceeds.”

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