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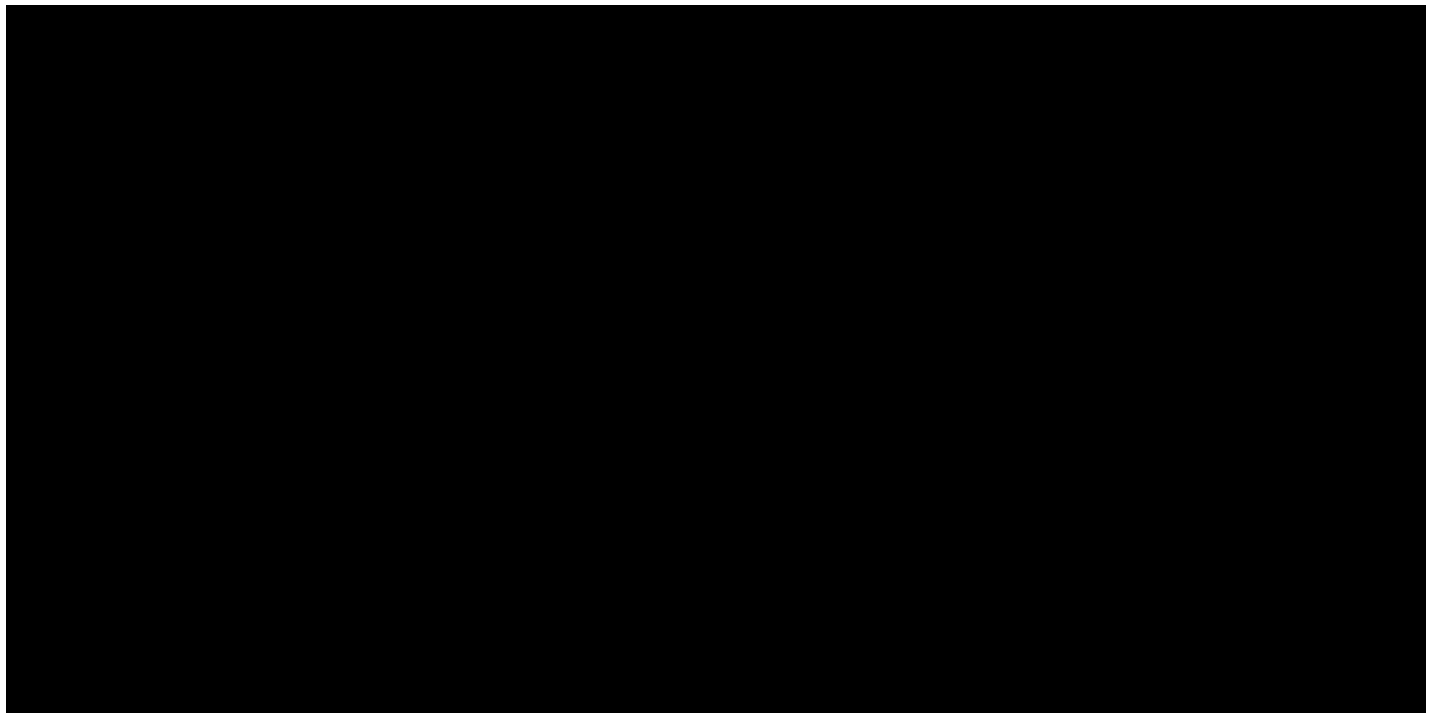
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NEWS

Town of Thurston passes sludge spreading ban

Wednesday, October 18th 2023, 11:18 PM EDT

By **Alexandra Deryn**



TOWN OF THURSTON, N.Y. (WENY) -- There was a town board meeting in the Town of Thurston, Wednesday evening, where residents spoke out about the possible environmental concerns if the spread of "sludge" is allowed to happen.

Casella Waste Systems, Inc. purchased a local company called Leo Dickson & Sons Inc. last July. Casella now plans to use a practice called "sludge spreading." The company said the practice is environmentally safe.

The town board disagreed and voted to put a ban in place that they said would protect the land and water in Thurston.

"It's violating the residents' constitutional right for clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment," Michael Volino, the Town Supervisor, said. "So, it's our town...towns...based on the Municipal Home Rule law have the ultimate say on land use issues and we are just defending the rights of Thurston residents."

During the public hearing portion of Thurston's Town Board meeting, residents spoke in favor of banning the practice of "sewage sludge disposal" by waste companies. "Local Law #3" restricts companies from spreading bio-solids on cropland, which can contain PFAS, also known as forever chemicals. (<https://www.epa.gov/pfas/our-current-understanding-human-health-and-environmental-risks-pfas>)

Wayne Wells was one resident speaking in support of the ban. He said the exposure to PFAS through soil and water could lead to serious health effects.

"Yes, we can be focused on PFAS chemicals because they are the latest discovery of the danger that is inherent in putting sewage sludge in its current state on the land," he said. "This is a beautiful country with beautiful people, and I don't want to see it despoiled by the greed of the waste industry and the incompetence of government."

Casella's Division Manager Mary Rayeski responded to complaints alongside the Vice President of the company, Larry Schilling, about the company's practices. She said they are committed to protecting the environment.

"I encourage the Town of Thurston to work with Casella towards a resolution," she said. "This will avoid prolonged litigation."

Schilling said the town is not following the right procedures on the matter.

"If the whole state were to ban this reuse of bio-solids...then it would all have to go to the landfills and that has serious greenhouse gas impacts," he said.

Following everyone's comments at the meeting, the board passed Local Law #3 (https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/4c611eac-8ffa-4708-af3b-dea66cb37775/downloads/Thurston%20Draft%20Local%20Law%20___%202023%20Draft%20

ver=1697535787474) unanimously.

"The resolution is carried," Volino said. "5-0."

Casella said it bought Leo Dickson & Sons in July of 2022, and has not spread any bio-solids to date. Schilling said Casella will likely challenge the decision in court.

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