

Landfill - New Hampshire Union Leader



Concern grows over proposed landfill

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By John Koziol

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LISBON — The Conservation Commission recently raised questions about possible contamination of municipal wells in case of a liner break at a proposed landfill in Dalton.

Casella Waste Management of Rutland, Vt., which owns and operates a landfill in Bethlehem, says that landfill is running out of room, so it wants to build a new one in nearby Dalton.

But Jon Swan, a Dalton resident among the most vocal opponents of the proposed Granite State Landfill, wrote Wednesday in an email to Gov. Chris Sununu that opposition to the landfill continues to grow.

He noted that at 2020 Town Meeting, voters in Sugar Hill and Whitefield supported articles in opposition to the Dalton landfill, with the select boards of both communities seconding the sentiments in public letters.

Later in 2020, the Bethlehem, Whitefield, Littleton and now Lisbon conservation commissions, as well as the Ammonoosuc River Local Advisory Committee, said they were worried about the negative environmental and economic impacts of the landfill on Forest Lake State Park and nearby communities.

Joseph Fusco, a vice president with Casella Waste Systems, said Wednesday that his company continues to focus on having “a conversation with the citizens of Dalton and their elected town leaders.”

He added that Casella has been “encouraged by a growing number of residents and supporters who are making their voices heard, asking important questions, and seeking to understand the opportunity

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and long-term benefits for Dalton,” noting that, “What is notable about the list of commissions expressing their concerns is that none of them is in Dalton.”

In a veiled reference to Swan — whom Casella sued over his statements about the company — Fusco wrote that “Despite the strong-arm tactics employed by one individual in town and agitation by outside groups, more and more residents are learning the facts and coming to the conclusion that the Granite State Landfill can give the town an economic boost it has never experienced before.”

He pointed out that the state Department of Environmental Services, not municipal conservation commissions, determines “regional waste management solutions.”

Local commissions, Fusco said, overlook the statewide beneficial impact of the Granite State Landfill, revenues from which “will also enable Casella to build the state’s first materials recovery facility (MRF) in central New Hampshire to manage mixed recyclables.”

In December 2020, the Whitefield Conservation Commission told the DES’ Wetlands Bureau in a letter that it was worried about its municipal water supply.

“The proposed Casella Landfill development project will damage Whitefield more than any other community or town in the area,” wrote Chairman Frank Lombardi, adding that “Our particular concern is the proximity of this project to our primary well that provides Whitefield’s town water supply. Leachate from this project would drain directly into Forest Lake and from there downstream into our primary water supply.”

Tom Alt, chairman of the Littleton Conservation Commission, in a letter to the DES dated Monday, challenged the agency to “abide by its own mission statement to deny this project.”

That mission statement, he said, is to “help sustain a high quality of life for all citizens by protecting and restoring the environment and public health in New Hampshire. The protection and wise management of the state’s environment are the main goals of the agency.”

