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Senate panel advances landfill siting reform bill

By Kevin Landrigan Union Leader Staff

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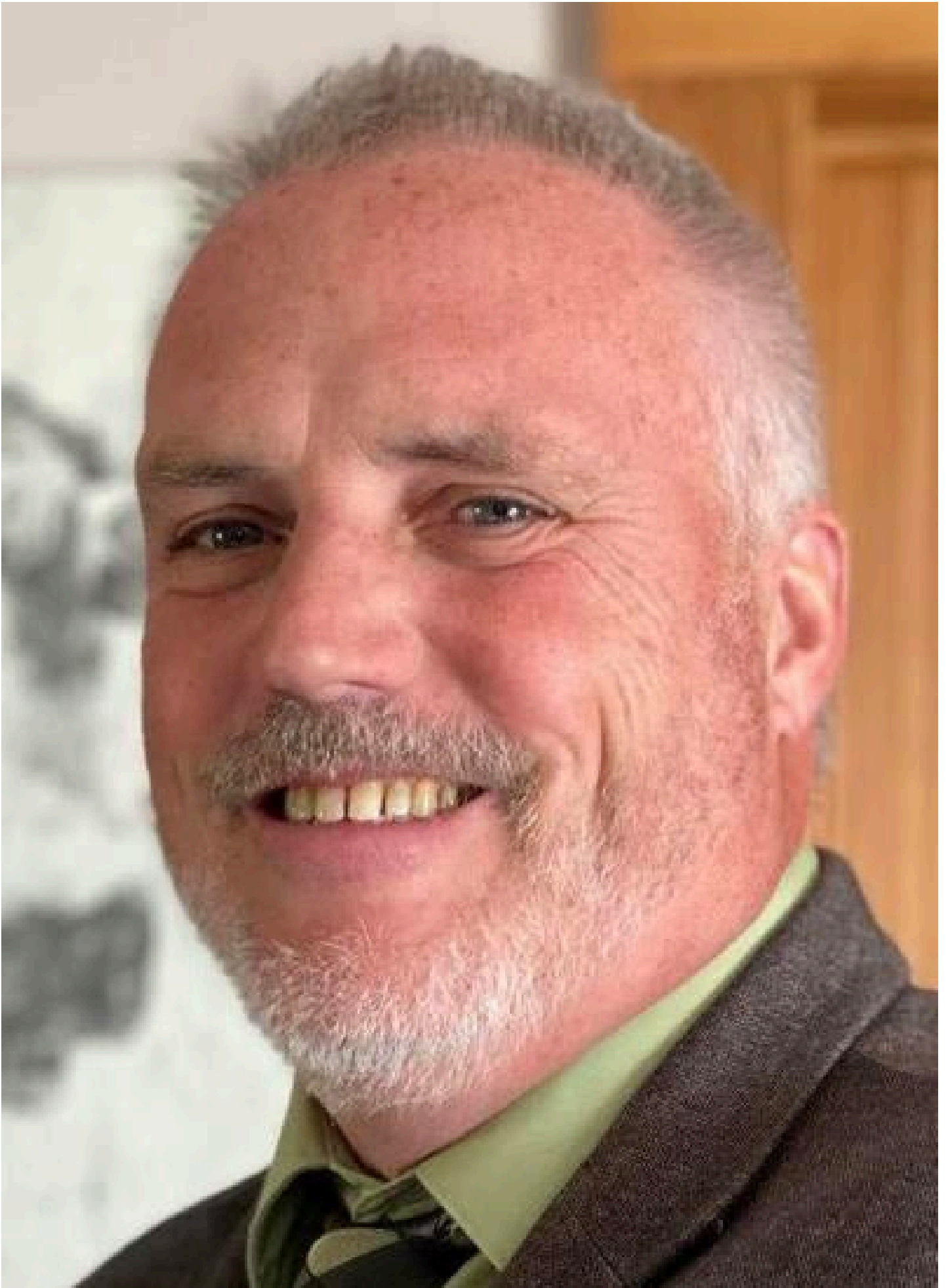


The North Country Environmental Services landfill in Bethlehem, which Casella Waste Management says is running out of capacity.

John Koziol/Union Leader Correspondent

A Senate panel has unanimously approved legislation to create a new process for approving new or expanded landfills in the state.

State Sen. Howard Pearl, R-Loudon, authored the proposed rewrite that he said resulted from months of meetings with stakeholders.





Howard Pearl

Union Leader File

It would create a new site evaluation committee that would be empowered to decide whether to recommend a permit for a solid waste developer.

The process is structured as similar to the site panel that approves proposals for new power facilities, Pearl said.

"I think it sets forth a very good process," Pearl said.

This amendment to a House-passed bill (**HB 707**) will go before the full Senate when it meets Thursday.

Pearl had been working with the office of Gov. Kelly Ayotte, who called for a moratorium on new landfills when she first ran for governor in 2024.

"We are not determining outcomes. The contracts and obligations are currently in place; it does not override them. It provides a new procedure for the siting of landfills," Pearl said.

The Department of Environmental Services, and not this site panel, would determine the level of capacity need for a new or expanded landfill, he said.

The goal was to reach agreement with House members on a competing site evaluation committee bill (**HB 1189**) the House passed and Senate sent to study.

Pearl admitted there remained issues in dispute with some parties.

"We almost got there. I still realize there are potential concerns with some of the language," Pearl said.

Sen. David Watters, D-Dover, praised Pearl for getting closer to a final compromise.

"I think it is important to move something forward," Watters said.

What's Next: The full Senate is expected to endorse Pearl's rewrite when it meets Thursday.

Outlook: This issue will almost certainly go to a House-Senate conference committee to work out differences between two versions of the bill.

klandrigan@unionleader.com

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Kevin Landrigan

Senior Political Reporter