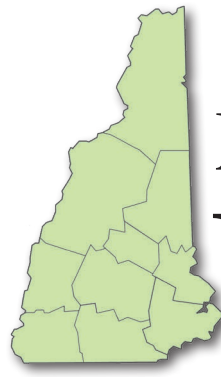


Beware of landfill developers bearing gifts

AS ADAM SEXTON made clear in his WMUR broadcast on June 18, all four of the major declared candidates, from both parties, running to replace Governor Chris Sununu have come out in opposition to Casella Waste Systems building a giant new landfill (the GSL project) in Dalton.



Eliot Wessler



NEW HAMPSHIRE VOICES

We who oppose it are not surprised. We think opposing GSL is a no-brainer decision for anyone in New Hampshire who prioritizes public health and environmental quality over corporate profits. The candidates will, of course, speak for themselves during the campaign, but suffice it to say that there is now a strong consensus that this is the wrong time and that the Dalton site is the wrong place for a giant new landfill.

Moreover, given Casella's business model, permitting the GSL project will likely put New Hampshire on a glide-path to becoming New England's trash dump.

The GSL landfill project would be a disaster for the Granite State. First, our state has plenty of landfill capacity and we won't need a new landfill for decades. Under the most conservative assumptions, our present landfill capacity will last for at least another 10 years. Under realistic assumptions, our state has enough landfill capacity so that we may never need to permit a new landfill in New Hampshire.

That is not stopping Casella — it has been on a merger and acquisition binge, buying up trash collection businesses all over New England, and it now needs a

place to dump all that extra rubbish. And because New Hampshire has the weakest landfill regulations of all New England states, we have a target on our back.

Second, the site Casella chose for the GSL landfill is essentially in the middle of a sand and gravel pit, a location that hydrogeologists and soil scientists say is just about the worst possible place to locate a landfill. As a result, the GSL site would put the water supply systems in the Ammonoosuc/Connecticut and Merrimack River watersheds at undue risk for PFAS contamination. By its own admission, Casella chose that site because it found a landowner willing to sell for cheap, and because Dalton is one of only 14 towns in New Hampshire without a zoning ordinance, making it an easy target.

Third, New Hampshire is already awash in out-of-state trash and the GSL project

will make matters worse. Just short of half of all the trash that is currently landfilled in New Hampshire comes from other states, primarily Massachusetts. GSL has told environmental regulators that up to 49% of the trash landfilled at GSL would come from out-of-state sources; but based on analysis of data in GSL's permit applications, that figure may be more like 60%.

If we allow GSL to be built, our state is very likely to go past the tipping point where we can't stop New Hampshire from becoming the de facto dump for all of New England.

Casella's response to Adam Sexton (from its director of communications) was essentially that Casella will hold hostage its plans to build a new recycling center in southern New Hampshire to win approval of the GSL project. In other words, Casella is willing to gift New Hampshire a new recycling center but only if it can ram its

misbegotten GSL landfill project down our throats. This is a grotesque use of hard-ball political tactics, it is inconsistent with reasoned environmental regulation, and may possibly be illegal.

We hope and expect that New Hampshire decision-makers, including town officials, state legislators and gubernatorial candidates, won't fall for the political pressure that Casella has telegraphed that it plans to use.

Casella has been telling our state that it is committed to sustainability, but it's only now that it is having trouble getting support for the GSL project that it plans to build a new recycling center. This begs the question: Why doesn't Casella commit to building a new recycling center in southern New Hampshire without a quid pro quo for a badly sited and unneeded landfill in the North Country?

As Casella begins its promised "candidate education" tour, we trust the gubernatorial candidates will not be swayed by its strong-armed tactics, gifts and promises. Candidates need to look no further than Casella's extremely poor operating track record at its NCS landfill, and its penchant for heavy-handed lobbying and litigation in its dealings with the town of Bethlehem, to understand exactly who they are being "educated" by.

Here is a public service announcement to New Hampshire's next governor and other decision-makers: Beware of landfill developers bearing gifts!

Eliot Wessler lives in Whitefield.

Letters

Adopting a lost pet, be sure it's really homeless

To the Editor: The cat or dog you choose at an animal shelter as a forever pet may actually be a missing or lost pet that someone is desperately searching for. While it is recommended that owners have a pet microchipped and registered, not all owners do.

When an animal goes missing with no identification, it is considered abandoned and a shelter can legally put it up for adoption. When adopting, ask how the animal happened to come to the shelter and get its background information. In one instance, I saw an ad on Craigslist.org for a missing Bengal cat. The very next day, I saw the same animal being offered for adoption on a shelter website. Yes, this is lawful,

but it is also deceptive and unethical.

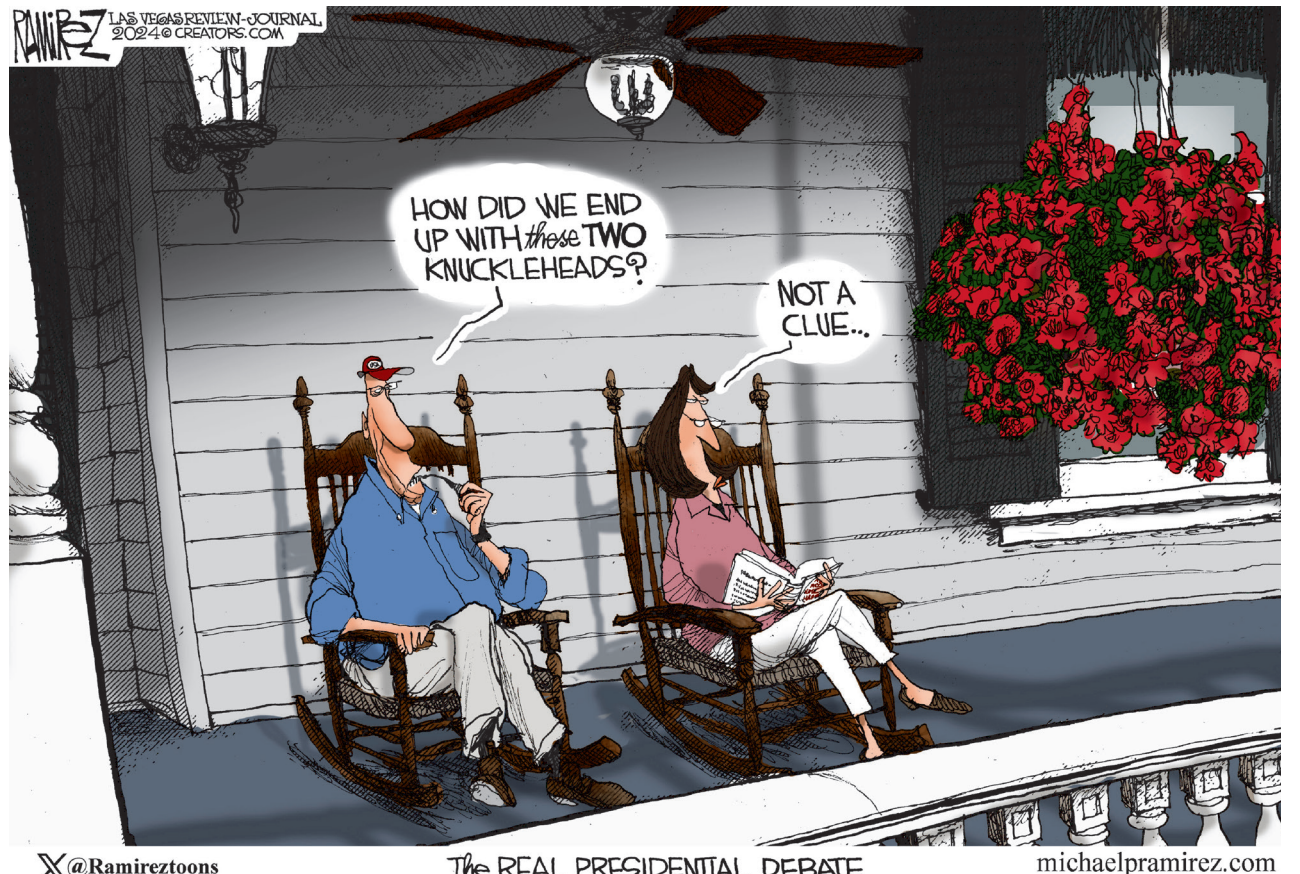
You are not just adopting a pet; you are buying the pet. As always, it is buyer beware. The pet your child falls in love with needs to be one that is waiting for a forever home and someone to love.

CHRISTINE HANAGAN
Bridge Street, Manchester

Performance drugs may be good for debating

To the Editor: Back a few years, I fell asleep while driving. I saw a "sleep" doctor who prescribed a drug that I will not name here. I was told it would enhance my energy without the "jitters." He said jet pilots use it. I can imagine our debaters using this. Why not?

JP MCGIFFIN
Bedford



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Legislature missed opportunities on housing last session

THE STATE legislature took up a number of bills this session aimed at alleviating our record housing crunch. Now that the session is over, we know that they have only partly delivered on much that voters and advocates want. Legislators made progress, but also missed opportunities.

New Hampshire continues to struggle through the worst housing shortage of its history. We've had the highest inflation of any state since 2021. Average rents here spiked 45% since 2019, compared to 25% nationally, according to one estimate. Fewer than 4,000 homes were for sale last month in the entire state, one of the lowest figures ever recorded.

Voters continue to say that high housing costs and low housing supply are the number one issue facing the state. Polls show they want zoning reform as part of the solution.

The New Hampshire House responded by setting up the Special Committee on Housing to develop and vet legislative solutions. They took many hours of testimony



Jason Sorens

and crafted several bills to make it easier to build new homes and slow the rate of housing inflation.

Several of those bills passed the House, but the Senate watered them down or killed them. A few minor changes passed into law.

One of the most important bills would have strengthened the state's accessory dwelling unit (ADU) law. ADUs or "in-law apartments" benefit both homeowners and renters. Homeowners get more space that they can use for a family member or rent out to help pay their mortgage. Renters get more choice about where to live and lower rents. Right now many towns limit ADUs through "poison pills" like costly discretionary permits and parking requirements. Some towns even require homeowners to build four extra parking spaces with an ADU!

The bill sailed through the House, but it stalled in the Senate. Sen. Sharon Carson got the chamber to "indefinitely postpone" the bill. That meant the House couldn't come back and attach it to other legislation.

Another important bill would have let you build a house or apartment with only one parking space. Most towns have higher minimum parking requirements.

Minimum parking requirements are among the dumbest government regulations on the books. While "free parking" sounds nice, you should really think of a parking minimum as a cap on nature and living space. There's a fixed amount of land, so anything you have to dedicate to blacktop you have to take away from floor space and natural areas.

There's no need for parking minimums because people already want to build enough parking for their customers. And when you're forced to build extra parking, you're making more impervious surface, which raises flood risk, leads to more salt and pollutant runoff into our

groundwater, reduces property value (raising taxes for everyone else), and makes building more costly.

For these reasons, planners and economists around the country have been calling for eliminating all commercial and residential parking minimums. You'd be hard-pressed to find any expert who favors parking minimums.

The House passed parking reform without any opposition, yet the Senate significantly watered it down. Sen. Bill Gannon got his committee to amend the bill to say that towns can require two parking spaces per unit. This is similar to what a lot of towns already do. Ultimately, a conference committee settled on a compromise, but it isn't nearly as ambitious as what the House initially passed, let alone the wholesale reform that experts recommend.

Finally, Senator Rebecca Perkins Kwoka's "HOMENibus" bill was passed into law and awaits the governor's signature. This bill made several positive process changes, but it didn't remove any zoning

restrictions that make it hard to build.

Why did establishment Republicans in the Senate come out against housing bills this session? I reached out to Senators Carson and Gannon for comment, but they did not respond.

Probably the main reason they did not oppose HOMENibus was that local governments did not oppose it, but they opposed the other bills because some local governments came out against them, wanting to retain their unrestricted privilege to stop housing. The Senate has always been more favorable to public-sector lobbyists than the House.

One of these senators has drawn a primary challenger. That candidate,

Republican Emily Phillips, did respond to my request for comment. She says, "I consider myself a 'housing champion.' When Senator Gannon opposes reasonable legislation such as the parking reform or ADUs, he is stunting the state's economy and telling businesses that we are not friendly to employers. Housing must be at the forefront of policy in New Hampshire, or we will continue to lose out on young families and talented workers."

Whether you're for or against zoning reform, it's good to know where your representatives and candidates stand. This issue won't go away soon.

Jason Sorens is a senior research fellow with the American Institute for Economic Research. He lives in Amherst.

New Hampshire Voices

New Hampshire Voices is a regular feature, replacing our editorial page with Granite State viewpoints and letters.

Letters should be sent to Letters@UnionLeader.com. Opinion pieces may be sent to Opinion@UnionLeader.com. Letters must be within the body of the email. Attachments won't be opened. Due to volume, submissions cannot be acknowledged.

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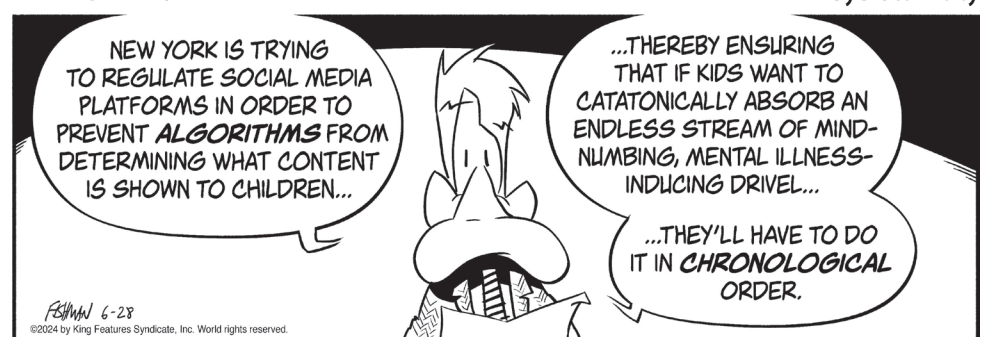
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"Where the Spirit of the Lord Is, There Is Liberty" — II Corinthians 3:17

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MALLARD FILLMORE

By Bruce Tinsley



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...THEREBY ENSURING THAT IF KIDS WANT TO CATASTROPHICALLY ABSORB AN ENDLESS STREAM OF MIND-NUMBING, MENTAL ILLNESS-INDUCING DRIVEL...

...THEY'LL HAVE TO DO IT IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER.

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