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FEATURED

## Littleton Switches Landfills, Trash Hauler

Robert Blechl [rblechl@caledonian-record.com](mailto:rblechl@caledonian-record.com) Staff Writer

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During Monday's Littleton Select Board meeting, transfer station manager Steve Bean made the case to the board to switch from the Casella landfill in Bethlehem to the Mt. Carberry landfill near Berlin, on the rationale that there will be a gap between when the Bethlehem landfill closes and when or if Casella's proposed landfill in Dalton opens. (Photo by Robert Blechl)

**LITTLETON** — After three decades, the town switched to another landfill and trash hauler.

The change follows concerns about a gap between when the Casella Waste Systems' NCES landfill in Bethlehem closes after 2026 and when or if the company's next proposed commercial landfill in nearby Dalton — which to date has no approved permits, has not begun construction, and faces stiff opposition — will open.

During Monday's Select Board meeting, at the recommendation of Littleton Transfer Station manager Steve Bean, the board voted 3-0 to end its contract with Casella and to enter into a solid waste disposal contract, effective Nov. 1, with the municipally owned Mt. Carberry landfill near Berlin.

They also voted 3-0 to enlist Northumberland-based Normandeau Trucking as the hauler. The five-year contract with Normandeau comes with a 90-day opt-out clause.

"We had an extension with Casella's landfill through May of 2026," said Bean. "Because it's an extension, we only need to give them a 30-day notice. We are not bound to stay through May 2026."

Casella has said that NCES will close in late 2026 or early 2027, said Bean.

At the Littleton board's July 22 meeting, Select Board member Kerri Harrington spoke of the proposed landfill in Dalton and said, "Right now they're predicting, if it happens at all, 2028, '29, if it even happens."

At the July meeting, Bean said the switch to Carberry would cost Littleton an additional \$17,000, mostly in transportation costs due to the greater distance.

In its standard one-year contract with towns, Mt. Carberry, which is owned by the Androscoggin Valley Regional Refuse District, will charge Littleton a tipping fee of \$72 per ton of municipal solid waste, construction and demolition debris, and bulky waste, and would allow the town to deliver up to 1,600 tons annually without further approval.

“Casella actually went up twice on their transportation costs in the last three months,” said Bean. “It’s around \$570 for transportation and it’s between \$80 and \$82 for the tipping fees.”

Littleton owns the four containers for each of the three transfer station units, with one container as a backup.

For cost-efficiency, Bean recommends that Littleton buy two more containers so there are three backups, with the idea being that that the town will save money by not having Normandeau drive from Littleton to Mt. Carberry and back to Littleton.

There is a certain hauling rate that is higher if Normandeau comes to Littleton and back versus Normandeau coming to Littleton with an empty container from his place up north, said Bean.

Bean said he is prepared to put the request for two heavy-duty containers, which would cost about \$18,000, on a town meeting warrant article.

“Casella did put in a proposal to just do our hauling,” he said. “The price was a little bit less for hauling, but the fact that they’ve gone up twice in the last three months doesn’t give me a warm fuzzy feeling.”

Select Board members agreed.

“I appreciate you doing all this work,” said Harrington.

“We’ve been struggling on what to do,” said Bean. “Because of the landfill situation, Bethlehem was forced to close. The Dalton landfill, as you’ve heard tonight [following a presentation by the North Country Alliance for Balanced Change], who knows what’s going to happen there. The window is closing between Bethlehem closing and this one opening, if it ever does, so I just think we need to do something sooner than later.”

Mt. Carberry also accepts municipal sludge.

Currently, Littleton has a one-year contract with Casella for sludge, said Eric Oliver, interim director of the Littleton Department of Public Works.

A new contract is under review, he said.

“In a year, we can make a better decision after seeing what happens with this,” said Oliver. “They are aware that we are looking and they said even if you do go away, things change, they don’t know what’s going to happen with Dalton, but in the future if you’re not happy they’d be more than willing to work with us. They understand.”

“It’s pragmatic,” said Harrington.

“It’s a timing thing,” said Selectman Roger Emerson.

The board and Bean also discussed implementing dump stickers for vehicles arriving at the Littleton Transfer Station to reduce the number of non-residents using the station to offload their waste.

In the past five years, with COVID-19 and more people in the area, traffic at the transfer station has increased 30 to 40 percent, and not all are coming from Littleton, said Bean.

“If we can control those numbers, that will reduce the trips to Berlin,” said Bean.

Littleton resident Pat Kellogg also suggested encouraging more recycling, to which Linda MacNeil, chair of the Select Board, agreed.

Bean said a three-year grant through the Northeast Resource Recovery Association will include education and a study of the contamination in Littleton's current waste stream.

Board members suggested that residents can obtain their dump stickers when they register their car.

In addition to approving the contracts with Carberry and Normandeau, the board gave Bean the go-ahead to come up with a dump sticker proposal to present to the board at a future meeting.

Several weeks ago, MacNeil, Kellogg, and state Rep. Linda MacNeil, D-Littleton, toured both the Carberry and NCES landfills.

MacNeil likewise said Casella representatives understood the town's reasoning to contract with Carberry.

"The one thing at Carberry is they have their own wastewater treatment plant for their leachate," said MacNeil. "They bought the plant from James River, the paper company. They do that all right there. That sort of impressed me. It was eye-opening. It helped me understand the process better and supported my vote tonight as well."

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Robert Blechl