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Open Letter to Dalton - Jon Swan

Jan 29, 2023

Open Letter to Dalton

To the Editor:

To My North Country Neighbors:

I hope you are paying attention to the latest developments in the Town of Dalton. Two petitioned warrant articles have been submitted for a vote on Town Meeting Day, Tuesday March 14, calling for the abolishment of both the town planning board and the town conservation commission. You may be scratching your head, wondering who would want to do such a thing, and why? The answer is disturbingly obvious, if you've been paying attention to the landfill fight that has torn Dalton apart, pitting those selfish, shortsighted (and PAID) Casella supporters, shielded by Dalton Mountain from any negative impacts from the proposed landfill site, against those living on the other side of the mountain, whose health, safety, and quality of life would all be greatly impacted, should Casella's landfill project become a reality. Yes, thanks to the article in the Sunday edition of the Boston Globe, January 22, 2023, we now know Casella has been paying its advocates in Dalton! These same people, who resorted to a broad misinformation campaign to dupe unsuspecting Dalton voters into surrendering local land-use control in June, 2022, now seek to remove even more, potential obstacles to Casella's unneeded landfill project, by abolishing both the town planning board and conservation commission!

Keep in mind, the planning board had previously denied an April 2019 "lot-line adjustment" application, one that Casella apparently still needs, in order to be able to close on the land deal with Mr. Ingerson for the landfill project. The Planning Board has also invested considerable time, effort, and tax dollars, in conjunction with the North Country Council, to update the very important Town Master Plan, a planning document that serves to guide the overall character, physical form and development of the town. The 2011 Town Master Plan, and the current updated draft, both assert the basic premise that "Dalton is a rural, residential community and should remain so in the future. Dalton's essential rural character and quality of life are defined by the town's natural environr

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(rivers, forests, fields and ridges). Future development should be consistent with and seek to protect Dalton's natural environment." The proponents of the Casella landfill project don't like this, as it confirms that Dalton is NOT an industrial town, and that dangerous industry like what Casella is proposing, next to Forest Lake, is in direct contradiction with the qualities and character of tiny, rural Dalton, which makes Dalton such a wonderful, special place to live. We should all strive to protect and preserve our environment and natural resources, it's a big part of why we live here!

The conservation commission has already provided invaluable input on the initial wetlands permit application for the landfill project, submitted by Casella to NHDES in 2020. That application was ultimately withdrawn by Casella, due to widespread public opposition and concerns over environmental impacts. The conservation commission did its job, weighing in on the permit application. A town conservation commission is tasked with protecting the environment and natural resources of the town it represents. That is a good thing, right? Thus, it is only natural that the town conservation commission would be concerned with any development that would negatively impact the environment and natural resources of the town. In this particular case, it's the landfill project, poorly sited amongst hundreds of acres of porous soil, high-ranking, forested habitat, and surrounded by wetlands that feed into the nearby Ammonoosuc River.

If you are someone who enjoys the outdoors, who places great value on clean air, water, and soil, whether it be for recreation or just overall quality of life, you should be deeply concerned about these latest efforts by Casella's paid supporters in Dalton. By removing these 2 volunteer boards, they are further helping to pave the way for Casella's landfill project in Dalton, which will have dangerous, far-reaching, negative impacts on those property owners closest to the proposed site, on the SW/Forest Lake side of Dalton Mountain. It's a shame what Casella, with its payments and promises of money, has done to the poor, rural Town of Dalton. It's a shame that good people, volunteers, who were duly-appointed by the elected town selectboard, all of whom have given so much of their valuable time and energy in representing their town's best interests, are being subjected to this abolishment effort, with their character denigrated by neighbors who don't even attend the very meetings they seek to prevent from being held. I hope the North Country is paying attention, and I particularly hope the good citizens of Dalton do the right thing on Town Meeting Day, and vote to keep both the town planning board and conservation commission intact!

There is a public hearing scheduled for Thursday, February 2, 2023, at 7pm at the Town of Dalton municipal building, relative to the abolishment of the town planning board. The members of the Dalton Conservation Commission will be there to support the town planning board. It would be nice to see public support for these good people, against the efforts of those inspired by greed and a blatant disregard for the public good.

Thank you!

Jon Swan, Chairman

Town of Dalton Conservation Commission

Dalton, N. H.

Dalton Conservation Commission Website