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Permit application for Dalton landfill withdrawn -- for now

By John Koziol Union Leader Correspondent

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Jon Swan, a Dalton resident, stands next to his Jeep, which is a rolling testament to his opposition to a proposed landfill.

John Koziol/

Union Leader Correspondent

BETHLEHEM — While not doing backflips and with expectation that it will be refiled, opponents of a proposed landfill in Dalton near Forest Lake State Park are cheering the temporary withdrawal of a wetlands permit application by Casella Waste Systems.

Based in Rutland, Vt., Casella Waste Systems wants to build the Granite State Landfill in Dalton because its existing landfill in Bethlehem, known as North Country Environmental Services on Trudeau Road, is running out of room.

To build the GSL, Casella needs several permits, both federal and state, including a wetlands permit from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) because the project is expected to impact some 17 acres of wetlands.

In a Dec. 10 letter from Casella CEO and Chairman John Casella that was provided by Jon Swan, who has opposed the GSL for more than two years, Casella wrote that his company was withdrawing the DES wetlands permit application but would resubmit it at an unspecified time in 2022.

Casella explained that the DES “has expressed an interest in coordinating its review of the wetlands permit application with certain other federal and state applications for permits that will be submitted for the GSL project.”

He added that the withdrawal “will also allow us to take into consideration the public opinion that we have gathered and will continue to solicit through this project” while giving GSL time to perform “additional field work” for the applications.

Without naming him — although he has an active lawsuit in Grafton County Superior Court alleging that Swan defamed him and made false public statements about Casella Waste Management — Casella wrote that opponents who’ve objected to the Dalton landfill “from the outset” would offer their own viewpoint on the approval process and, more succinctly, the need for the landfill.

“Without the new landfill capacity in Dalton and recycling infrastructure in another part of the state that we have proposed, the cost to New Hampshire will be high both environmentally and economically,” Casella said in closing.

On Monday, Swan, while standing across the road from the NCES, which he is prohibited to set foot upon, said there is no lack of landfill capacity in New Hampshire.

For example, the Mount Carberry Landfill in Success, in eastern Coos County, is seeking to expand, said Swan, something that would extend its capacity until 2041, while the Waste Management Turnkey Landfill in Rochester has capacity until 2034.

The Granite State Landfill is unneeded and would have a negative impact on the environment and local property values, Swan said.

John Koziol