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FEATURED

# Seneca Town Board unanimous in wanting county landfill closed in 2028

By DAVID L. SHAW [dshaw@fltimes.com](mailto:dshaw@fltimes.com)  
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Wickham

Submitted



File photo

**SENECA** — This Ontario County town has hosted the county landfill since 1974 — and the current Town Board unanimously agrees the 389-acre facility along Routes 5&20 should close in 2028.

The board voted 5-0 Tuesday to support closing the landfill when its current state permit expires and when the facility is projected to be at capacity. Their action will be forwarded to the Ontario County Board of Supervisors, the group tasked with making the final decision on the landfill.

There was a second motion on the agenda supporting continued landfill operations beyond 2028, but once the initial measure was approved, it was withdrawn.

Board member Howard Keeney listed a host of things the town was able to accomplish with revenue it received annually from Casella Waste Systems, which manages the landfill for the county. Keeney said upgrades and improvements were made to roads, water systems and infrastructure, there was commercial development in the Routes 5&20 corridor, and a tax stabilization fund was established.

“We are in good shape for the future,” he said.

However, Keeney countered that the town has done its share in hosting the landfill and shouldering the problems it created.

“Management of the landfill has improved,” noted board member James Malyj. “I worked in the shadow of Seneca Meadows Landfill in Seneca Falls for 30 years and saw the impacts. This landfill only minimally affects me, yet I agree it should be closed in 2028.”

“I agree with what’s been said,” added board member Jason Mosher.

Board member Jesse Orbaker said he is a farmer and has worked the ground around the landfill site.

“The current management has done a great job, but moving forward, I remember talks about this town’s future, and I can’t support keeping it open beyond 2028,” he said.

“When I ran for a board seat in 2010, I saw no one in production agriculture on the board,” Town Supervisor Drew Wickham said. “Even though I no longer do that full-time, I support them and pledged to be their voice. I listened closely over the last eight months and met with many farmers. They were almost all opposed to the landfill continuing.

“I agree that this is our only chance to have a say and I don’t want to have that legacy of keeping it open beyond 2028. It’s nothing against the management, but it’s still a landfill.”

During public comment prior to the vote, farmers Rick and Laura Pedersen, and Casey Kunes, voiced support for closing the landfill.

“This will be one of the most important votes you will make that will affect the future of the town of Seneca,” Laura Pedersen said. “I hate to see the citizens put up with this much longer. It’s time to end it. Enough.”

“If this remains a landfill, it will be here when everyone in this room is dead,” Rick Pedersen added.

Ed Lavin, a 25-year resident of Johnson Road, said the board had this one chance to make a decision on the landfill and its future.

“Probably the main stakeholders in this are farmers. Some of the best farmland in the world is here,” Lavin said. “Our town is not in a bubble. We are part of the Finger Lakes region. Look at what’s happening in Seneca Falls. I’m fearful what has made the town, the county and the Finger Lakes great could be compromised if the landfill remains open after 2028. We have done our job, lived up to our contract since 2004. Fulfill that contract and close it in 2028. Listen to the farmers affected.”

The landfill is permitted to accept up to 2,999 tons of waste per day. Of that, 90% comes from outside the county. The county landfill accepts 86% of the waste generated in the county.

- In a related matter, there were no comments at a public hearing on the proposed \$4.49 million 2023 town budget. The budget again contains no general or highway fund tax levy because of revenue the town expects to receive from Casella through a Host Community Agreement. The budget also includes \$500,000 in Casella revenue to reduce the town’s county property tax levy.
- The board approved a local law allowing the concealed carry of firearms on town property, with the stipulation that signs will be posted warning people coming onto town property that there may be people there with firearms.