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## Sununu Hears From Casella Protester

By PAULA TRACY, InDepthNH.org June 30, 2021



Jon Swan of Save Forest Lake in Dalton grabbed a few minutes with Gov. Chris Sununu during a break at the Executive Council meeting in June.

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CONCORD – Perseverance paid off for Jon Swan of Save Forest Lake in Dalton when he came to the State House Wednesday and briefly got the ear of Gov. Chris Sununu, although he didn't seem optimistic about their conversation.

Sununu handed him a card with information for Swan to reach out to his staff to see if he could help resolve the dispute which has many North Country residents concerned about the potential for environmental damage from a proposed second North Country landfill.

Swan was standing outside the Governor and Executive Council chambers at the State House as department heads and state leaders entered. He was holding a big "SAVE FOREST LAKE" sign.

Swan was handing out a "MISSING" brochure with the photo of Sununu on it urging residents to call the governor.

"We'd like to ask him to protect the property rights of homeowners and taxpayers in the North Country from the negative impacts associated with the dangerously – irresponsible landfill development project next to Forest Lake State Park," it read.

The brochure had an attached fact sheet related to Casella's bid to build a landfill 190 feet from the state park.

The public hearing for the wetlands permit application will be at White Mountains Regional High School at 3 p.m. July 14. "We cannot allow for NHDES to violate its own mission statement by permitting this dangerous project, surrounded by wetlands," according to Save Forest Lake's [website \(https://saveforestlake.com/\)](https://saveforestlake.com/).

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The towns of Littleton, Whitefield, Carroll, and Sugar Hill and the Conservations Commissions of Dalton, Littleton, Lisbon, Whitefield, Bethlehem, and Sugar Hill as well as a number of state, local, and national conservation organizations have been opposed to the plan which Swan said would deliver 468,000 tons of waste a year to the proposed landfill.

"Governor Sununu needs to get involved and show he cares about our property rights, not Casellas!," it read. During a break in the long council meeting, Swan, who was sitting in the front seat of the audience for the council meeting, wearing a "SAVE FOREST LAKE" T-shirt, approached Sununu and had a brief conversation.

Swan said Sununu asked him what he could do about the situation and gave him contact information for his staff.

But Swan said it seemed the governor was “off-putting” on the subject. Still, he said, it was progress to have a face-to-face dialogue with the governor, and the reason he came on Wednesday.

This was only the second time since COVID-19 restrictions that the public has been allowed to attend council meetings in person.

Since this project was floated, Swan said, “we have been trying to get the governor’s attention because there are a lot of property owners who are worried about their rights to enjoy their property free of nuisance. This is going to have a great impact on our quality of life, local tourism.”

But Sununu has not been responsive in two-plus years, Swan said.

Bills to oppose the siting of landfills in direct proximity to state parks passed three times in the House over the past two years but could never pass the Senate.

“GOP leadership for some reason has just been adamantly opposed to protecting our state parks. We don’t know why. I am here representing the North Country to just try to get an audience with the governor as constituents,” Swan said.

Dalton just passed an extension of zoning in an effort to stop the landfill. Casella has not yet obtained local permits for the project.

“We don’t need it,” Swan said. “I wish the Department of Environmental Services would highlight that.”

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