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## Too Risky for Dalton - Nancy Mittleman

Aug 22, 2024

### ***Too Risky for Dalton***

#### **To the Editor:**

Casella presented its proposed Host Community Agreement (HCA) to the Town of Dalton on July 29th, but the Chair of the Select Board did not allow public comment or questions. Unfortunately, this action was taken without discussion or a vote by other Select Board members.

The proposed GSL landfill would have a tremendous impact on our town for generations to come. An HCA is a long-term agreement, and any deal brokered will be, in effect, brokered for our grandchildren as well. It is important to recognize that the GSL landfill will significantly impact not just Dalton (a town of about 900) but over 10,000 living in Whitefield, Bethlehem and Littleton. These neighboring towns currently have no voice in this discussion, nor are they slated to receive any compensation in the HCA. The Dalton Select Board should welcome the community, in a public hearing, to review and discuss any proposed HCAs.

I've read the HCA and I encourage all Dalton town residents to also read it (see [https://townofdaltonnh.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/HCA\\_July2024.pdf](https://townofdaltonnh.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/HCA_July2024.pdf)). You don't have to be an expert lawyer to find lots of half-truths and loopholes. Much of the HCA language is conveniently vague, allowing the company much wiggle room but offering little for the Town of Dalton and residents.

Right from the start Casella barely acknowledges that living near a landfill is a nuisance and a danger to your health. The HCA (Recital D) implies Dalton residents have nothing to worry about because “State and federal law impose strict requirements on landfills to prevent pollution...” Really? Talk to people who live near Bethlehem’s NCES landfill, and many will tell you they wish they didn’t. They complain about dirt, noise, foul odors, scavenger animals, and they worry about the resale value of their homes diminishing and contamination of their water supply.

Recital E implies that the only problem Dalton residents actually need to worry about is “...increased truck traffic to and from the landfill.” But Casella’s truck route maps clearly suggest this is the only problem Dalton residents do not need to worry about. Instead, Casella’s trucks will make the roads in Whitefield, Bethlehem and Littleton more congested and dangerous.

Several of the twelve provisions in the HCA seem benign but, in my opinion, shift risk away from the company and put it on Dalton residents. One example is HCA (5.0 et al.) which allows Casella to unilaterally terminate benefits to Dalton. So, for example, if in year 5 Casella either walks away from GSL or is forced to close it, all compensation and benefits to Dalton will screech to a halt and the town and/or state will be left to clean up the mess.

Another example is the HCA provision (4.5) to compensate Dalton homeowners for loss of property value. That provision has a huge loophole that, I believe, will make it hard for a Dalton homeowner to prove a loss of property value and to win such compensation.

The biggest issue for Dalton residents will be who gets compensation under the HCA, and how much. One option (4.1) would divvy up the compensation pie based on property assessments. The problem with this option is it results in a huge windfall for the largest landowners in town, making their land more valuable and thereby shrinking the slice of the pie available to other residents. Another option (4.2) would have the town administer the compensation pie. The benefit of this option is that compensation might be fairer, for example, giving every resident, including residents that rent rather than own property, an equal share of the pie. But this option presents the risk that the compensation pie might be misappropriated or mismanaged.

Unfortunately, the deck is stacked heavily against Dalton coming out a winner in negotiations with a multi-billion-dollar corporation. Moreover, win or lose, the HCA process is going to be expensive.

It doesn't make any sense to me to have Dalton even entertain the HCA until after the November elections. All four of the candidates (including both Republicans and Democrats) vying to become New Hampshire's next Governor are on record as opposing GSL. And no wonder, as the HCA (10.0) makes clear nearly half of all the trash landfilled at GSL will likely come from out-of-state. Growing numbers of people/voters seem to be coming to the realization that if GSL is built, NH will be on a glide-path to becoming the de facto dump for all of New England.

What a hot mess! Don't let Dalton fall in a loophole!

Nancy Mittleman

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