

New Hampshire Bulletin

Landfill site evaluation committee proposal emerges from Senate with bipartisan support

BY: MOLLY RAINS - MAY 14, 2026 5:32 PM



📷 Sen. Howard Pearl, a Loudon Republican, introduces an amendment to House Bill 707 on Thursday, May 14. Pearl said the version passed that afternoon by the Senate would not compromise local control in the landfill siting process. (Photo by Molly Rains/New Hampshire Bulletin)

With bipartisan support, the New Hampshire Senate approved a proposal for a site evaluation committee Thursday after the body's previous proposal generated pushback and criticism from North Country residents and lawmakers.

An amended version of [House Bill 707](#) passed on a voice vote Thursday afternoon after it was recommended by the Senate Finance Committee, 7-1, on Tuesday.

An earlier Senate amendment to HB 707, authored by Loudon Republican Sen. Howard Pearl and recommended by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee earlier this year, passed the Senate in January, also by voice vote. But it was met with less robust support on the floor and also stirred opposition among some North Country residents, for whom landfills are a topic of local importance.

Some activists, including North Country Alliance for Balanced Change President Wayne Morrison, said the amendment prioritized the interests of private waste corporations at the

expense of local control. In April, Morrison **vocally rejected** some provisions in the Senate's previous amendment to HB 707.



📷 Sen. David Rochefort, a Littleton Republican, expresses support for an amended version of House Bill 707 in the Senate on Thursday, May 14. "It doesn't unwind settlement agreements or contracts that communities have already entered into," he said. "... (HB) 707 is very, very good." (Photo by Molly Rains/New Hampshire Bulletin)

But the version of House Bill 707 passed on Thursday received support from the alliance, as well as from Littleton Republican Sen. David Rochefort, who has advocated for local control in the landfill siting process.

As amended, "[HB] 707 is very, very good," Rochefort said on the Senate floor Thursday. He called the approval process it would create "comprehensive" and "deliberate."

Rochefort said the bill as amended also would not threaten existing

legal agreements between towns and private entities. A legal settlement between the town of Bethlehem and Casella Waste Systems currently precludes expansion of a Casella-owned landfill in Bethlehem; town officials previously said they worried the prior version of HB 707 could override that agreement.

On Thursday, Sen. David Watters, a Dover Democrat, asked Pearl if the amendment would override existing municipal regulations or agreements.

"No ... we were very careful about that," Pearl said.

The amended version of HB 707 approved on Thursday creates a seven-member site evaluation committee. Its membership includes the chair of the New Hampshire Waste Management Council, as chair of the committee; the commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs, or a designee; the commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, or a designee; and additional and alternate members appointed by the Governor and Executive Council. Those include a member of a local conservation commission; a person with expertise in the private waste industry; a person with expertise in municipal planning; and a person with environmental expertise.

The bill directs the committee to consider a proposed landfill's impacts on a range of topics, from public health and safety to aesthetic impact, traffic impacts, impacts on wildlife, and more, and requires applicants to provide information on these and other elements of their proposal.

It also requires an applicant to note whether the facility would have a preference for waste generated in New Hampshire. Out-of-state waste is a significant contributor to New Hampshire's active landfills.

"I promised I would continue to faithfully negotiate ... and I hope that I have done that," said Pearl. "... I thank you for your patience on this. I know it's been a long haul."

In a press release issued after the Senate Finance Committee recommended the amendment on Tuesday, Morrison endorsed the proposal. He also thanked Gov. Kelly Ayotte, who has also pushed for a site evaluation committee and said in April she would support local control in the siting process.

"I'm proud to see the Senate advance legislation that gives local communities a say in the site evaluation process for landfills," Ayotte said in a statement Thursday afternoon. "I've said from day one that we would not let beautiful areas of our state become a dumping ground for out-of-state trash."

The House will now review the amended bill.