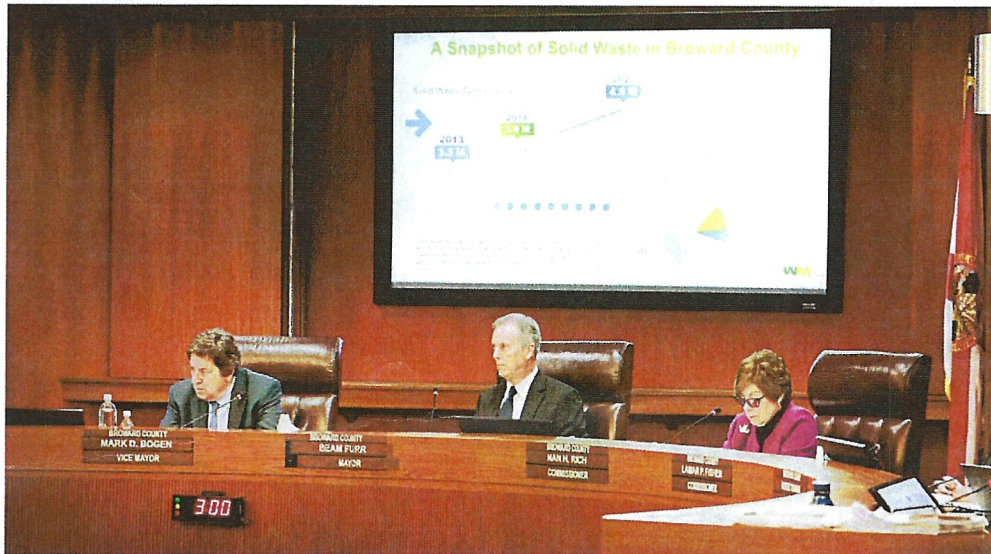


LOCAL NEWS

Will landfill grow taller and wider? Broward now aims for a decision next month



(Carline Jean/South Florida Sun Sentinel)

Broward County Vice Mayor Mark Bogen, left, Mayor Beam Furr and Commissioner Nan Rich listen to speakers address Broward's landfill expansion on Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025. (Carline Jean/South Florida Sun Sentinel)



By **LISA J. HURIASH** | lhuriash@sunsentinel.com | South Florida Sun Sentinel

After hourslong debate about whether to finally to grant Waste Management permission to expand a landfill, Broward County commissioners decided late Tuesday to wait longer to decide its fate.

They committed to making a final decision Feb. 25 on whether the Monarch Hill landfill will be allowed to grow.

The landfill now is 210 feet and is currently permitted to go to 225 feet. The landfill is constructed like a pyramid, where it is built as a slope. The request would allow it to get wider at its base on 24 acres — land that was a former waste-to-energy incinerator — so it can peak at 325 feet.

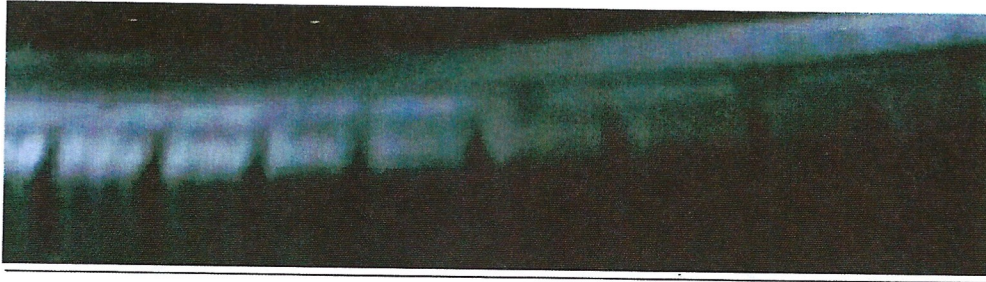


(Carline Jean/South Florida Sun Sentinel)

The Broward County Commission listens to speakers address the landfill expansion on Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025. (Carline Jean/South Florida Sun Sentinel)

“We cannot vote today, we need additional information,” said County Commissioner Steve Geller.





The debate about the landfill's future has been delayed and argued for five years.

The landfill is at the Monarch Hill Renewable Energy Park, in an unincorporated part of northern Broward, bordering various cities. The landfill, whose western boundary is right by Florida's Turnpike, is east of Coconut Creek. The landfill also is just south of a section of Deerfield Beach, and it's north of a portion of Pompano Beach.

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"Waste Management is telling us this is necessary," warned Broward County Mayor Beam Furr. He said the landfill has just six years of life remaining and the corporate giant "cannot guarantee it can be used in emergency situation."

"Let that sink in for a minute," he warned.

As the County Commission aimed to make a decision on the matter, a separate panel, the Solid Waste Authority of Broward County Executive Committee, previously voted to urge the county to delay the issue yet again.

"We will always need a landfill and we need to maintain capacity," he said. "There's a lot at stake and time is of the essence."

But Sunrise Mayor Michael J. Ryan, who serves as the chair of the Solid Waste Authority of Broward County Executive Committee, said a master plan for solid waste and recycling is in the works, and more time is needed before a decision about the landfill is made.

"We understand the crisis," he said.

That's ultimately why the County Commission agreed to hold off, and said it would be their final delay and enough time for the committee to come back with a plan.

"Legally we shouldn't drag this out too much longer," County Attorney Andrew "Drew" Meyers warned them.

Still, Furr said, the authority's consultants have said Broward will still need future landfill capacity.

Growing concerns

Lenny Vialpando, Broward's chief innovation officer and director, said there is a portion of landfill that is not lined, and there is seepage now, but it does not exceed federal standards.

County Commissioner Mark Bogen said that was a concern. "What is the rush?" he asked other commissioners. "There is seepage coming out of that landfill. ... Are we talking about health and humans or are we talking about money?"

But before the [County Commission even began its debate](#), some representatives from the cities near the landfill pleaded with county commissioners to be heard.

"There is no assurance at all this will be the last request, the last expansion," said Deerfield Beach City Manager Rodney Brimlow. He said his residents were "fearful" and "feel forgotten."

Deerfield Beach Commissioner Michael Hudak said the expansion would hurt

Added Deerfield Beach Commissioner Todd Drosky: "This comes down to dollars versus residents."

Former Coconut Creek Commissioner Lisa Aronson asked for the landfill to be capped, not expanded, and to "think of the animals, the birds and the butterflies."

Said Hillsboro Beach Mayor Dawn Miller: "If our groundwater is contaminated you can't undo it." She said a 10-story addition was "quite significant."

The landfill was the site of the iconic "Hollywood" sign shot in the Tom Cruise film "Rock of Ages," so Coconut Creek Vice Mayor Jackie Railey quipped if it gets 100 feet higher it could be one day be depicted in cinema as Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest point in Africa.

She urged county commissioners to consider themselves "like parents" to "protect safety and well-being" of their residents.

Waste Management's reasoning

Waste Management lawyer Bill Laystrom said the expansion is needed to "gain capacity that has just about ended" in what Waste Management refers to as the "last cell" of space that's available. "We're running out of existing space," he said.

Said Waste Management spokesperson Chris Carey: "We don't have the capacity to wait anymore. We don't have the time to wait anymore."

About 5,000 tons of trash keep coming in daily, he said, and it needs a place to go.

Among what Waste Management offered the county in exchange: No household garbage after October 2027 in favor of construction debris; spend \$2.3 million on recycling education.

Waste Management has argued by cutting out household waste, such as diapers and food, eliminated would be the smell that neighbors say affects them.

There was also a lingering warning by the company's attorney: Refusing to

Still, even if the county were to approve the expansion in February through a land-use plan amendment, the process wouldn't be over. More approvals, including zoning, are required before the expansion could actually begin.

Lisa J. Huriash can be reached at lhuriash@sunsentinel.com. Follow on X, formerly Twitter, @LisaHuriash

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