

Comments for Public Hearing regarding Juniper Ridge Landfill expansion

October 18, 2016, Cross Center, Bangor, ME

Hello,

My name is Charles Leithiser. I am a resident of Maine and have been a homeowner in Old Town for about the last 40 years.

Back in the early 1990s, residents of Old Town were promised (by Mr. Thom Doyle and others) that if the City of Old Town allowed a paper mill sludge dump, said dump could never become anything else. Since then, we have been told that the now Juniper Ridge Landfill would not be permitted to accept Municipal Solid Waste, that there would be no odor problems or issues created by trash trucks, that there would be "hothouse tomatoes" grown at the landfill, that the landfill gas would be used to heat the University of Maine and possibly an expanded Industrial Park in Old Town, and on and on. All of these claims turned out to be false, so I am wondering why myself and the Board of Environmental Protection should believe anything we're hearing from Casella / NEWSME today or tomorrow. I, for one, am frustrated by and tired of the lies.

Citizens of Maine have been told that the site of the Juniper Ridge Landfill is, hydrogeologically-speaking, "perfect" as the groundwater under the landfill bubbles up. There is no mention, however, of what happens to that groundwater and waters beneath the ground when millions of tons of waste are piled on top of it. If this water begins to be "squished" out to the sides, it threatens numerous small streams near the landfill and then the Penobscot River. Leachate from the landfill also ends up in the Penobscot, which is currently at the center of Atlantic salmon recovery efforts. It makes no sense to try to improve the water quality of the river on one hand, while simultaneously allowing contaminated water from the landfill into the river with the other hand.

The Bureau of Government Services, acting as owner of the Juniper Ridge Landfill for the State of Maine, has failed miserably in its oversight of the landfill. In her partial approval of the Public Benefits Determination for the proposed expansion, then DEP Commissioner Patricia Aho included recommendations and steps that should occur before the Expansion application was submitted. BGS and Casella ignored those recommendations. It appears that one state department believes it can disregard the requests of another state department. In this case I believe that the regulating agency, the Maine DEP / BEP, should have final authority over the proposed expansion, which would include the findings of the Public Benefit Determination. The landfill Operating Services Agreement needs to be firmed up to actually prohibit any waste whose point of discard is outside of Maine's boundaries, and to determine how much "oversize bulky waste" is appropriate for disposal at the landfill – both of which were mentioned by Commissioner Aho. One item of particular concern here is that the 187 Maine communities that were part of the MRC (including most of Maine's largest towns and cities) produced exponentially less Oversize Bulky Waste than the amounts produced at the KT1 (now ReEnergy) facility in

Lewiston, which is supposedly delivering to the landfill only "in-state waste" from the few remaining communities not part of the MRC.

As a member of the Juniper Ridge Landfill Advisory Committee, I was surprised to learn at one of our meetings that the BGS has no other plans for waste disposal in Maine beyond Juniper Ridge – and in fact BGS is not even looking for or considering other options. The BGS and Casella have backed the DEP / BEP into a corner; in fact one could easily conclude that the BEP thus has no choice in this case other than approval of the expansion.

Much has changed with regard to waste in Maine since the Public Benefit Determination. There is less of a need for increased landfill space now than there was just two years ago. By 2018, about half of the MRC communities which had been sending trash to the PERC plant will no longer be doing so, as they have instead signed on with a new waste plant to be built in Hampden. This will result in less volume coming from the PERC plant (which processed MRC waste) to JRL; residues from the Hampden plant will not be sent to Juniper Ridge. Food waste and other organic materials are now beginning to be removed from the waste stream and those efforts will no doubt increase moving forward. This also reduces the amount of waste needing to be landfilled. Between one-third and one-half of the waste disposed of at Juniper Ridge did not become waste within Maine's borders – it was disposed of in other states. Tightening the regulations around what is supposed to be "in-state waste" only would greatly reduce that amount of landfill space needed in the future. The BGS and Casella have created a false "trash crisis" and by doing so have effectively given the BEP only one solution.

The state has also failed in its duty to uphold agreements related to Juniper Ridge. The Host Community Agreement between the landfill and the City of Old Town states that only residues that result from the processing of Construction and Demolition Debris for use as alternative fuel for the biomass boiler at the paper mill in Old Town will be deposited at Juniper Ridge. When questioned as to why there continued to be CDD fines and residues coming to the landfill after boiler operations in Old Town had ceased, word eventually came out that there had been amendments made to the OSA by the state and Casella, but news of these amendments had never been provided to the City, the DEP or BEP, or to any other party interested in the operations at the landfill at the time of implementation.

As I see it, the BEP does have options for its decision in this matter. You can outright deny the expansion application, or delay it until the State gets a handle on what is coming to Juniper Ridge and from where. Enforcing Commissioner's AHO's recommendations in the Public Benefit Determination would be a great place to start that process. The whole premise for the state owning the landfill is to enable the state to control it; something that the BGS has not accomplished. That task now falls to the BEP. Prohibit the practice of "trash laundering" that allows much of Maine's landfill capacity to be used up by waste that was not discarded within the state's borders. The citizens of Maine and the residents of Old Town certainly deserve at least that much. If not, we will sadly be right back here within a few years.

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