

What was George J. Mitchell's role in Casella's landfill strategies in Maine?

Thinking back about some of the missing pieces in the history of the Old Town landfill, I looked for details of a George J. Mitchell connection that has not been fully explored. I learned from SEC filings that George Mitchell was on Casella's board and "continued" to be a member after Oct. 15, 2002. In the next list of board members that I could find, Mr. Mitchell was not shown as a board member as of Aug. 1, 2003. I could not find any documentation as to exactly when or why he left the board.

What makes this interesting to me is that John Baldacci was elected Governor in Nov. 2002, while George Mitchell was on Casella's board. A detailed timeline that I prepared based on public records shows that in March, 2003 (no specific dtes given): "Casella in discussions with MRC; 'Commercialization of GNP site'".

Casella's first attempt to gain landfill space in Maine was aimed at acquiring the Dolby landfill owned by GNP. Casella documented this strategy in their proposal to the MRC to form a "Public/Private Partnership" as described in a June 30, 2003 letter, which is included in Casella's response to the RFP to run the state-owned landfill. Briefly, the letter states that in January, 2003 - when John Baldacci took office - GNP filed for bankruptcy, and Casella explored acquisition of their Dolby landfill. Casella's letter to the MRC stated, "In the end, this arrangement was not to be ..." They did not mention that this strategy would be against existing Maine law. The alternative concept that prevailed, a state-owned, Casella-operated landfill in Old Town, emerged with with the announced closure of the Old Town mill, only months after the collapse of the Dolby concept..

Threatened mill closures provided major leverage for the landfill deals. The Old Town opportunity was initially going to be offered to Casella without an RFP, until the attorney general stepped in. Both the GNP bankruptcy and the Old Town closure were announced in the first months of the Baldacci administration.

In revisiting this history I'm wondering why Casella was the only waste company involved in these deals and talks? And why, so soon after Baldacci's election, did George Mitchell disappear from Casella's board? Why was Baldacci so ready to set in motion the many state efforts that were aimed to aid only Casella?

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