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Rutland Herald
New dump site sought

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ROCKINGHAM - The company considering a landfill near the banks of the Connecticut River has withdrawn that proposal in favor of looking at other sites in town.

James Bohlig, president of Casella Waste Systems of Rutland, told a cheering crowd of about 50 area residents he would withdraw the proposal for a dump centered around the lands of Thornton Lillie, a member of the Select Board.

"I hope in doing that the community can come together for what is best for Rockingham," Bohlig said. "I would like to have the opportunity to work with this community and make a difference."

Bohlig said his company had located several other sites in town, none on the banks of a major river, which could allow for longer-term agreements for a landfill with the potential for more benefits for both town and waste company.

"We're going to give the board other alternatives," Bohlig said.

Earlier in his presentation to the town, Bohlig noted that the Lillie site would limit Casella to a 20-acre landfill which could only be used for 10 years, unless they could buy surrounding properties - and few adjacent landowners had seemed willing to sell.

However, there are five other sites in Rockingham which would allow for larger and longer-lived landfills, a more profitable building venture for Casella.

Though Bohlig refused to disclose the potential locations until later in the development process, he did say all of the sites had at least 50 acres

of land suitable for landfill development and would generally have access to Route 103 and I-91.

The withdrawal of the proposal for the Lillie site came at the end of a somewhat contentious public meeting during which the benefits Bohlig outlined for the town were largely overwhelmed by residents' concerns.

While many questioned the environmental and scenic wisdom of a landfill near the Connecticut River, some raised questions about Lillie's involvement in setting up the deal.

Lillie could not immediately be reached for comment Friday.

"Mr. Lillie's land is right next to the river," Theresa Perry, a Missing Link Road resident, said, adding that legally required buffer zones would not be enough to protect from a major calamity. "A landslide could destroy the entire Connecticut River and all the communities downriver."

At least one Dummerston resident noted that the offers being made to Rockingham to host the dump - with up-front payments in the millions of dollars - seemed quite appealing and asked if Casella might consider other communities.

For a 35-acre, 20-year landfill, Casella was willing to guarantee Rockingham a "tipping fee" for garbage of about \$30 a ton cheaper than what the town is currently paying, along with payments totaling \$6 million over the life of the landfill, \$1 million of which would be paid up-front.

For the larger, 30-year facility, Casella would offer an even cheaper disposal price and a \$13.5 million payment, with \$3 million paid up-front.

In addition, on both 20- and 30-year landfill deals, Casella would offer the community free curb-side recycling and trash pick-up.

At least one Rockingham resident wasn't convinced by the deals offered by the solid waste company, especially when he discovered that Bohlig didn't even live within 100 miles of a landfill himself.

"Why don't you live next to a landfill," Richard Matthews asked. "You should live next to one if you're proposing to come here and put one in our backyard."

Bohlig, however, said he was not embarrassed to live far from a landfill and that he would feel very comfortable with one in his community.

"Landfills today are very high-tech, very regulated," Bohlig said.

Select Board Chairman Lamont Barnett said he remained committed to giving Rockingham voters the final say on any landfill proposals.

"That's fair for every neighborhood," Barnett said. "It's something the whole community should talk about."

Bohlig said if Casella received permission from the community and the required permits in place this year, the landfill could be up and running by 2007.

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