

13 Hamlin St., Orono, ME 04473

Sept. 6, 2024

To: Karen Knuuti, Project Manager, DEP, Bureau of Remediation and Waste Management

Re: Comments on pending application for Public Benefit Determination, Juniper Ridge Landfill

Submitted as PDF via email (20240906-PCSchroeder-CommentsOnPublicBenefitDetermination

Dear Ms. Knuuti:

At the July 16, 2024 public meeting convened by the DEP to receive public comments on the pending application for public benefit related to proposed expansion of the Juniper Ridge landfill, I provided spoken comments. I have noticed that the "transcript" provided on DEP's web page devoted to this issue does not accurately present the comments that I provided then. To ensure that my comments are fairly represented, I have made a transcript of my remarks, which is provided below.

Thank you for your attention to the public's interest in this issues.

Yours sincerely,

Paul C. Schroeder

207 907 0906 (cell) / pauls@commoncoordinates.com

[Transcript of Paul Schroeder's July 16, 2024 public comments follows]

Good afternoon, my name is Paul Schroeder, I'm a resident of Orono.

I'm totally in accord with every person who has spoken so far. The comments have been very true and perceptive, and gathering them together, I think that the DEP should deny this public benefit application.

I'm here for a very specific and concise purpose, and that is to remind ourselves of a couple of dates in the history of this process. 1989 is when the state decided by law and policy that there were going to be no new commercial landfills. Part of the reasoning behind that was to preserve landfill capacity in Maine from being filled with out-of-state waste. That assumption was part of that legislation.

The next date is January 21, 2004. That's just a few months over 20 years ago. That was the day that I, and other people who are here, first came to a public informational meeting where we were told there will be no out-of-state waste, due to the arrangement of this agreement.

Now it turns out that that meeting, Jan. 21, 2004, was seven months after the Resolve was passed. Very little information had come out to the public. In fact, there was such a rush to find a contractor - and the contractor was part of the group that wrote the legislation - the Resolve was passed June 14, 2003, and the RFP was announced the day before the Resolve was even passed.

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So now we are here, 20 years later. The public was told there will be no out-of-state waste. However we found out through our own public researches that it was well known among the people who were going to be running this landfill, that they were going to promote exceptions. And these exceptions had to do with processing. And these processing exemptions rested on extending an analogy to the residues from the processing of ash, the ash residues from trash incineration.

Well, then it became “processing.” Processing became the mantra on how out-of-state waste could end up in Juniper Ridge. The public was not told one word about this at that public informational meeting. We weren't given this clearly important piece of information that we needed to know, to know what was going to be happening with this. And it's been years and years and years of delving into public records and attending meetings like this and watching the process unfold in a way that is beyond the ability of the public to have any kind of leverage in this process.

So I'll just say, this has been a long process, it has been a heartbreaking process, for me and many other people. It is not fun for me to be here today, although I appreciate that this process has to be undertaken.

The time to stop dumping in Juniper Ridge is now. The time to not approve an expansion, another expansion, of this monstrous pile of garbage in our landscape. The time to stop is now. And the time for the State to start taking seriously, we've said this so many times over the years, take seriously the supposed solid waste hierarchy.

Is there a public benefit? Let's weigh the benefits against the costs. And one of the costs in this whole process has been lack of public trust in state agencies and in the companies that are fulfilling these contracts. Another loss is to the surrounding communities, and what they have been undergoing through all of these years, with never a voice, including through this fictitious Landfill Advisory Council.

In any case, that's my message, and I hope that you and everyone else hears it and finds some way for this to work.

Thank you.