

City & Region

DEC seeks dumpers at old Wheatfield landfill, Cliffe says

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WHEATFIELD – The state Department of Environmental Conservation has started the process of trying to contact companies that dumped in the old Niagara Sanitation Co. landfill, Wheatfield Supervisor Robert B. Cliffe said.

The landfill was closed and turned over to the town in 1968, right after some Love Canal waste was transferred there by the state Department of Transportation. The Love Canal waste was removed last year from the site off Nash Road, but there's still plenty of municipal and industrial waste buried there.

Remediation of the site is a state Superfund project. The DEC changed the classification of the landfill in December to list it as a current threat to public health, which entitled the state to begin the process of seeking funds for the cleanup from those who disposed of waste there before the closure.

A fence and a sign warning people to keep out are urgently needed, Laurie Galbo told the town board,

“There are ATVers there every day,” she said.

A neighbor told her the cap placed over the site of the Love Canal waste already is partially torn up.

Cliffe said a fence all the way around the landfill would cost \$100,000 to \$150,000.

“We don't believe that should all be on the back of the Wheatfield voters, Wheatfield taxpayers,” Cliffe said.

On another environmental topic, resident Julie Otto urged the town to enforce its biosolids law against Quasar Energy Group's Liberty Drive anaerobic digester. It was designed to use microbes on food waste and sewage treatment plant sludge, converting it to methane gas to be used to generate electricity or make compressed natural gas.

The byproduct, which the company calls “equate,” is rich in nitrogen, and the company has distributed it to some local farmers for use as fertilizer, but critics say the use of material derived in part from human waste is dangerous and unhealthy.

The town's law, passed in 2014, bars Quasar from changing its waste digestion process without town approval. Last fall, the company started to generate Class A biosolids, which contain fewer pathogens than the Class B biosolids it was producing originally. The company said the change resulted from the material remaining in the digester longer because of difficulty finding a place to dispose of it.

Otto said, “I believe there are grounds for us to enforce our law.”

“That’s a really fine hair to split,” Town Attorney Matthew E. Brooks said. “They’re not doing anything different other than hanging onto it longer.”

Quasar has challenged the legality of Wheatfield’s biosolids law, which bars application or storage of the biosolids in the town. State Supreme Court Justice Frank Caruso heard arguments seven months ago but has yet to issue a ruling.

In other matters, the board allowed the DOT to replace, at state expense, old town water and sewer lines – Councilman Randy Retzlaff said some of those contain asbestos – as part of the widening of Niagara Falls Boulevard from Bergholtz Creek to Sy Road. Cliffe said that the two-year project is expected to begin this year.

Cliffe also warned the audience that public comment at the meetings is getting out of hand. “I’ve been asked by the board to take more control of the meeting. We’re here to do the business of the town, not to take shots from the town,” Cliffe said. He objected to “personal criticism” of town officials or employees, and reminded the crowd that there is a three-minute time limit for speakers.

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