



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION



September 11, 2003

Ms. Margaret J. Hall
Solid Waste Manager
Town of Branford
Solid Waste Management Commission
P.O. Box 150
Branford, CT 06405

Re: Acquisition of property adjacent to the Branford Landfill

Dear Ms. Hall:

The Bureau of Waste Management's Waste Engineering and Enforcement Division (WEED) has completed the review of your recent correspondence (i.e., e-mail dated August 28, 2003) regarding the acquisition of property adjacent to the Branford Landfill. As outlined in your e-mail, acquiring the neighboring property would provide an additional buffer to the landfill from surrounding land uses and also give the town discretion in developing the property.

As you are aware, landfills can present aesthetic, environmental and public health concerns to the community in which they are located. Compounding these concerns is an increase in property development encroaching on the existing landfill, which may result in incompatible uses. The Department strongly recommends that all municipalities assess the land uses adjacent to landfills to determine if they are compatible and make every effort to establish an appropriate buffer zone in order to mitigate impacts the landfill may have on adjacent properties.

If you have any questions regarding this letter please contact me at (860) 424-3313.

Sincerely,

David K. McKeegan
Environmental Analyst III
Waste Engineering and Enforcement Division
Bureau of Waste Management

DKM:dm

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Information available to Town officials and residents included:

- the landfill is a low-priority Superfund site;
- the landfill contains industrial waste, household hazardous substances (paint, paint cans, fuels), and sludges;
- contaminated soil is used as daily cover at the landfill ;
- water leaching from the landfill (leachate) contains volatile organic compounds; volatile organic compounds can be carcinogenic and have been identified as asthma triggers, particularly for children [**Monopoli testimony**]; ✓
- volatile organic compounds can migrate from leachate in the groundwater to surrounding soil and then migrate through the soil and become trapped in basements and other surface structures. The potential for volatile organic compounds to migrate to the surface at the Tabor Drive site is heightened because of the shallow water table on the site.
- the standards by which the constituents of leachate are measured change over time, and tend to become more stringent as knowledge grows and the methods of measuring become more precise;
- the landfill is not closed; the landfill is still accepting bulky waste and the 30-year post-closure monitoring period on the landfill has not even begun; with the recognition that landfill leachate persists for many years, the regulatory community is considering extending the required monitoring period beyond 30 years;
- residential development is a greater concern than industrial development because residential use, with continuous occupation every day and around the clock, necessarily heightens human exposure to potential contamination;
- methane, an explosive gas, is a component of the decomposition gas that is a by-product of the bacterial processes that take place in a landfill. Methane is explosive in concentrations above five percent. The landfill is generating methane. Levels in the landfill have been as high as 69 percent. Up to 60% methane was detected in a monitoring well in the vicinity of the landfill garage in July 2003. Testing at the property line between the landfill and the Tabor parcel detected methane at levels between four and five percent, within DEP requirements. At this time, the methane can easily vent to the atmosphere. When the landfill is closed, less of the methane can escape in this way, and more of the methane is likely to be forced through pathways in the soil. Methane can migrate at low concentrations but, if trapped, the concentration can rise to explosive levels. (These points are detailed, with references to the record, in the Planning and Zoning Commission's January 8, 2004 **Memorandum of Decision** on the Application of New England Estates, LLC.) ✓

The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection recommended that the Town establish an appropriate buffer zone around the landfill in order to mitigate the impacts of the landfill. [**DEP letter**]

First Selectman DaRos met with the owners of the Tabor parcel, but was not able to reach an agreement on a price for the parcel.

Planning & Zoning and the Court - Two Concurrent Processes