

January 24, 2024

Senator Stacy Brenner
Representative Lori Gramlich
Environment and Natural Resources Committee Members

Good Morning,

We are writing on behalf of the Winterport Solid Waste and Recycling Committee. We have been charged with educating the public about solid waste management and recycling in our community. As we gathered information it became all too clear that we face a deteriorating situation. We identified problems which were presented to the representatives of the Department of Environmental Protection at one of their regional stakeholder sessions. The issues we presented are laid out in the following document, DEP Maine Materials Management Plan.

We were pleased to see LD 2135 listed as an emergency bill. And we want to thank Representatives Dill, Bridgeo, Campbell, Cyrway, Milliken, Moriarity and Osher for sponsoring this bill. It addresses perhaps the most significant issue we are faced with; one created by the legislature when it decreed that it is up to each municipality to figure out what to do. We believe that "as each municipality determines how it wants to fulfill its statutory responsibility" is a short-sighted perspective. The hundreds of small towns in Maine have few options because the legislature and DEP fail to address this as the crisis it is and take action to provide facilities that can manage our waste effectively.

It is a crisis that was foreseen 35 years ago when Title 38, Chapter 13, §1302 was enacted: *The Legislature further finds that needed municipal waste recycling and disposal facilities have not been developed in a timely and environmentally sound manner because of diffused responsibility for municipal waste planning, processing and disposal among numerous and overlapping units of local government. The **Legislature also finds that direct state action is needed to assist municipalities in separating, collecting, recycling and disposing of solid waste, and that sound environmental policy and economics of scale dictate a preference for public solid waste management planning and implementation on a regional and state level.*** [PL 1989, c. 585, Pt. E, §2 (RPR).] That assistance has not been forthcoming.

It is our sincere hope that you will unanimously support LD 2135 and vote this out of Committee as Ought To Pass.

Thank You,
Alan Cohen, Nancy Gause, Joe Parise, Mary Anne Royal
Winterport

DEP Maine Materials Management Plan

- For 50 years we have been trying to make recycling work and it has not worked
- You acknowledge the fact that fluctuating markets make recycling less profitable
- Small towns do not receive compensation for their recycling efforts
- Winterport pays twice as much to recycle when compared to landfill tipping fees
- PERC is in foreclosure and the Hampden facility never opened for long term usage
- Lack of leadership at state levels leaves small towns at the mercy of transport companies
- The lack of regional facilities burdens towns and makes decisions based on economics rather than ecological best practices more likely
- What to do with waste must be driven by statewide comprehensive planning like that done when schools were required to regionalize; setting up regional centers like that operated by Mid-Coast Solid Waste Corporation or EcoMaine would give towns the ability of manage their waste effectively
- “as each municipality determines how it wants to fulfill its statutory responsibility” is a short-sighted perspective; the thousands of small towns in Maine have few options because the legislature and DEP fail to address this as the crisis it is and take action to provide facilities that can manage our waste effectively; your lofty goals do not make sense for the hodgepodge of facilities across the state
- DEP has been trying to incentivize local management of waste rather than providing organizational leadership for a statewide approach; each community is left to decide how managing its residents’ waste is to be executed and those in decision making positions at the state level fail to address the basic problem of a systemic rather than local approach to the problem
- As evidenced by the difficulties in this area of Maine waste management is not a for-profit enterprise; foreclosures, start-up failures, demands that Casella, for example, make are evidence of this; it is a necessary public service and must be addressed as such; and taxpayers must feel the financial pain of their mismanaged waste; compliance is a problem everywhere: Maine operates state owned landfills; time for Maine to operate state owned recycling centers, waste to energy facilities, etc
- Compliance with existing rules is not monitored; transfer stations across the state look vastly different; inspections are rare; reporting is almost meaningless as it is not detailed or specific to the issues faced
- Competitive grants are not the answer; they have been around for a long time and what has been the result?; according to your own report there has been little difference in MSW tonnage which far exceeds recycled tonnage which also has not seen much change
- The status quo is not working; and only at the state level can the needed change be addressed; and more of the same will not get us there; scrap this plan and start over
- Time to GET TOUGH ON WASTE; it needs to hurt before individual waste generators will change the way they acquire and dispose of their waste

Mary Anne Royal
Winterport