Testimony on request to increase unlined landfill tonnage maximum:

The request to increase the annual limits for disposal at an unlined landfill is being made to facilitate the closure of the Bristol Landfill.

The Bristol landfill began operation in 1926. The current site of the landfill is the same as what was established 89 years ago. The Bristol site has been operating under the states exemption for unlined landfills, which is currently at 1000 tons or less. Over the last 28 years (1000 ton exemption was put into law 1987), Bristol's solid waste facility has consistently received permits for operation in five-year increments. The most recent permit expires on December 31 2016. The landfill has an approved capacity to operate until 2030.

Recently the Bristol Select Board made a decision to try and close the landfill at the end of its current permit. The onset of Act 148, the ANR's dissatisfaction on the town's capital closure fund, and minor operational hassles led to this decision. The Board realizes that, with renewed energy, they could develop a business plan and operation plan that likely would meet state approval and as a result the landfill could remain in operation for another 15 years, using the 1000-ton exemption. This is not their first choice. It is important to note that in its 89 year history the Bristol landfill has NEVER HAD WELL MONITORING VIOLATIONS. The environmental track record of the site has been excellent. Yes, there have been operational snafus from time to time. Those problems have always been addressed.

Currently the town has approximately $600,000 put aside for closure. The estimated closure cost, which has varied with state input, is $1,200,000. If the town shoots for closure at the end of 2016 how can the capital necessary to close the landfill be raised? Choice number one is to work with the states premier solid waste firm, Casella, to develop a closure plan that would require extra household waste to be brought to the Bristol site. It is estimated that the landfill's current footprint would hold an additional 55,000 tons. This extra influx of money, from taking in the Casella flow, would raise all or most of the capital needed for closure in a about an 18 month period. This option would relieve the town's people from bonding, option two, to close the site. Bonding of $600,000 would have an approximate total cost of $875,000. This second option is particularly difficult as the town will be bonding for a new fire station this year, and will likely vote on a high school renovation that could run as much as $15,000,000. That is a lot of debt for a smallish community to bear.

The last option the Select Board has is to apply for another 5-year permit and keep the landfill operational for the projected life of the site. This is not the first choice but in light of the financial burden the town faces, it represents another possibility.

Option one, granting the town expanded capacity to operate for a limited period of time, represents the best option. Why? First it will allow for the raising of all or most of the capital needed to close the site using existing household waste. Second, it will reduce the 200 plus mile round trip Casella's trucks travel to their Coventry landfill. This reduces wear and tear on our highway and means less carbon emissions. Third it will reduce the, now modest, risk even further of ground water contamination at the Bristol site. I say this in that there is evidence, according to Casella, through the federal governments Hydrological Evaluation of Landfill Performance Study that, filling and rapidly closing an unlined landfill offers lower risks than prolonged operation.

Please keep in mind that the Bristol landfill has had no ground water contamination in its 89 years of operation. The waste that Casella would bring to the site is all household waste. The Bristol site is at least one half mile from the closest stream and the ground water flow at the landfill is in the opposite direction of the stream. To further the case I note a study done in 2008 or 2009 of the capped unlined landfill near the Indian Brook stream in Essex. Professors Ishee and Ross from UVM and another professor from the University Metropolitana in San Juan determined somewhat higher levels of heavy metals in the earth close to the landfill site but no or low levels of contamination close to Indian Brook. A well- capped landfill is a safer landfill.

Prior to option one's adoption the Select Board will hold public hearings to relate the consequences of filling the landfill rapidly. The two major issues townspeople would want to know include the amount of increased truck traffic in town and the greater possibility of unpleasant orders for brief periods of time during the day

It is our hope that this committee will help the town of Bristol figure out what can be done to make this plan work.

Thank you. Fred Baser Representative Addison-4