

Additional Testimony from Lindy Sargent for DUMP,
Don't Underestimate Memphremagog's Purity
February 4, 2020

RE: VNRC/Administration Proposed Act 250 Amendment to Eliminate District Commissions

Dear House Natural Resources, Fish, and Wildlife Committee,

My name is Lindy Sargent, and I am a resident of the town of Barton and member of DUMP, a local NEK environmental group formed in October 2018 after learning of the NEWSVT Act 250 application to expand the Coventry Landfill, permit #7R0841-13. I am writing on DUMP's behalf, as a member of our Advisory Committee.

This testimony follows my January 27, 2020 submission to this House Committee and is intended to clarify how the District 7 Environmental Commission listened to DUMP's citizen input and how DUMP specifically supports the need to retain District Commissions because they are open and accessible to concerned Vermont residents in their regions. That earlier testimony described the whole permit application; this testimony provides specifics to the time we had direct face-to-face communication with District 7 Commissioners, the night of the Act 250 hearing.

Members of DUMP's Advisory Board were invited to participate in a reconvened Act 250 hearing on January 22, 2019. That the hearing was reconvened, and in Coventry, when it might have been easier not to bother listening to the citizens, says volumes about accessibility. Nine of our group were able to be present in a packed hall, where other local residents were also in attendance, as well as the applicant, John Casella and numerous NEWSVT lawyers, employees and garbage haulers; representatives of the Agency of Natural Resources, including legal team; individuals (adjoining property owners) and municipalities with party status (from Quebec as well); representatives from Conservation Law Foundation, NVDA; and officials from the Town of Coventry. The hearing began at 5:45 p.m. and lasted almost until 10:00 p.m. Eugene Reid and the two other district commissioners listened and asked questions and answered questions for those 4+ hours. DUMP members left feeling comforted that our concerns about the landfill were heard by the Commissioners and that everyone else in the room got to hear our specific arguments. We knew that Vermont was in a tough place because the Administration and the Agency of Natural Resources did not have another plan for Vermont's Solid Waste Management, but we could hope for the best.

It took six months for the decision to be delivered (July 23, 2019), and as I mentioned in my January 27, 2020 testimony the permit was granted but with two very important conditions – that the leachate not be discharged into Lake Memphremagog's watershed via wastewater treatment plants which cannot filter out PFAS and that NEWSVT must hire an air & odor monitoring consultant. Since Vermont's water and air quality were our two foremost concerns, we were pleased that the District Commission added those conditions.

Would the new centralized Board that the VNRC/Administration Proposal is suggesting as a replacement for the District Commissions have offered such citizen access and insight? Would they have the local knowledge of watching a landfill grow into a man-made mountain and smell the regular odors that were not enforced and seen the changes to the watershed? A major expansion of the State's only lined landfill warrants the most comprehensive environmental oversight of Act 250, and we think that the District 7 Commission did a good job of that.

Thank you for your time in reading this testimony and your involvement in this important decision.

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