

David K. Leff, Essayist, Poet, Lecturer

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July 23, 2013

A City's Accidental High Meadow

Ensnconced in the angle created by the junction of two interstate highways and less than a five minute ride from the stone and glass towers of downtown, it's the wildest open space in the city. Once a rough swale along the Connecticut River, after almost three-quarters of a century accepting trash the now closed Hartford landfill rises like a mesa about 130 feet above the surrounding landscape.



The final resting place for what is broken, used up and unwanted, this 80-acre tomb for the wasted goods of life is becoming a fairytale meadow rich in wildflowers. Having a bird's eye view of the city, it may offer the finest panorama along the banks of New England's longest river. To the north and south, the grand corridor of the Connecticut valley spreads out like a map with trees, fields, water, roadways, church spires, smokestacks, bridges, rooftops, and all the tackle and infrastructure of modern life visible for miles. West and east not far distant, the horizon rises to lumpy, rugged highlands punctuated by a few antennae and towers.

Opened in 1940 as a classic open-burning dump, between 1953 and 1977 it took ash from the city's incinerator. Leased in 1982 to the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority, a quasi governmental entity, the landfill



stopped accepting raw garbage in 1988, remaining open for ash from a waste-to-energy plant and bulky and special wastes until the end of 2008. Now in the final stages of closure, the mountain of trash is being wrapped in a synthetic liner, covered with soil and seeded. Methane gas is recovered from 82 wells generating enough electricity to power 1,500 to 2,000 homes. Soon a six-acre array of solar panels will produce enough power for another 1,000 homes during peak sunshine.

Although currently closed to the public while bulldozers move soil and workmen lay piping and other closure facilities, not long ago I had the rare opportunity of riding to the top with a group of ornithological enthusiasts counting birds. The finished part of the uneven plateau was a startlingly lustrous prairie of waist high grass where daisies, lacy yarrow, buttercup, white and red clover, hawkweed, fleabane, the purplish pea-like blossoms of cow vetch as well as other common roadside flowers bloomed profusely.

The grasses and sky resounded with avian life. Redwing blackbirds cruised just above the meadow and seemed to chase each other. Uncommon Savannah sparrows and other birds alighted on fencepost-sized gas wellhead pipes.



A



spotted sandpiper with a clutch of young crossed the gravel wheel track, and killdeer scurried away from us performing a fake broken wing routine. A great blue heron flew overhead with its long legs outstretched and we spied red-

tailed hawks deep in the sky. We spotted a kingbird, indigo buntings, orchard and Baltimore orioles, grackles, cedar waxwings whose tail-tips looked as if dipped in yellow paint, goldfinches and other birds. It was a giddy carnival of color and song.

Once a smelly eyesore, this accidental high meadow is becoming a place of intriguing beauty, source of energy, and reserve of biodiversity. Bird expert Jay Kaplan calls it the best grassland habitat in the region. Here is recycling writ large, a debauched and degraded landscape transformed and healing into something else, a spot with a second chance. If we don't trash the opportunity with structures and overly organized activities, it's a place where future generations might literally stand on the broken things and dreams of the past and find quiet, contemplation, and the thrill of wild creatures in the midst of urbanity.



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Comments

Luis said...

Eric, you might get that chance! When I was on Hartford City Council, I chaired the Landfill Post Closure Task Force to make recommendations as to what should happen next.

One of the recommendations, creation of sustainable energy alternatives, is in the works with solar panels scheduled for the eastern slope.

But the main recommendation was the use of the space for passive recreation. So, hopefully, the city can create a manageable space where people can just go up there and, be!

Reply July 23, 2013 at 11:39 PM

Eric said...

What a neat experience! I hope I get the chance to climb up there some day.

Reply July 23, 2013 at 06:52 PM

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(URLs automatically linked.)

Email address is not displayed with comment.



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SUMMER FUN:

CRRA Trash Museum in Hartford

By COREY AMENDE
Staff Writer

There's that old saying that goes, "one man's trash is another man's treasure." There's also a more recent addendum to this saying that goes, "one man's trash is another man's exhibit at the trash museum" - literally.

Enter Dave Chameides. Originally from Connecticut, Chameides was living in California in 2008 when he decided to save all of his trash for one year in his basement. Chameides called this project "365 Days of Trash," and when the year was over he "donated" his trash to the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority Trash Museum in Hartford, where it has been incorporated into an exhibit.

All of the trash that Chameides - or "Sustainable Dave," as he is also known - saved during the year is displayed in a large suitcase that sits on the floor in front of a mural painted by artist Ted Esselstyn of Higganum. In total, Chameides had accumulated just 28.5 pounds of trash during 2008 - a stark contrast to the nearly 2,000 pounds of trash that the average person generates in a year. And to further show the amount of waste that the average person creates, Esselstyn saved all of his trash from painting the mural and incorporated it into the display as well - all 30 pounds of it.

The mural about Sustainable Dave is just one of the many entertaining and informative exhibits at the CRRA Trash Museum, located at 211 Murphy Road in Hartford. The museum is located off of exit 27, off I-91 in Hartford, just a quick drive from the exit ramp. The museum is open Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in July and August,



The CRRA recycling plant processed 120,000 tons of recyclables last year. Photo by Corey AmEnde.

and is open Wednesday through Friday from noon to 4 p.m. from September to June. Admission is \$4 per person and free for children under the age of 2.

The museum has been open since 1992 and is geared toward children in elementary school through middle school, according to Sotiria Montanari, the education supervisor for the museum. The museum features a number of hands-on, interactive exhibits for children of all ages to enjoy.

"You can see a real-life recycling processing center, so you can see the connection between what you put in your recycle bin and where it ends up," said Montanari. "And then there are a lot of fun activities to do with your kids." The recycling processing center is connected to the museum and all visitors can observe the center at work from a viewing room on the second floor of the museum.

Montanari says the children really enjoy seeing the large trucks moving materials around and dumping

them into various piles. "We take paper, newspaper, magazines, junk mail, cardboard, box board - which is like your cereal boxes - aluminum cans, steel cans, every plastic one through seven, and then we also take large rigid plastics which are your toys or large recycle bins which can no longer be used," added Montanari.

After the materials are sorted, they are baled and sold so they can be made into new products. Montanari estimates the plant processes about 300 tons of recyclables a day, five days a week. She said the plant processed 120,000 tons of recyclables last year.

After the children have observed the processing center, they can role-play in the discovery room downstairs, which features a mock crank conveyor belt like the one they just saw. The children can dress up with safety vests, jackets, hats and goggles and pretend like they are sorters.

Once the children have grasped the concept of recycling, they can move onto

the energy exhibit where they see the real value of recycling. There is a large scale that family and friends can stand on to weigh themselves and pretend they are an aluminum can and see how much energy they would save by recycling materials instead of producing them from scratch using natural resources.

"It's just like if you were to make paper from a tree, there's a resource," explained Montanari. "It's not just the cutting down of a tree and saving a tree, it's the resources involved in making the paper."

Children and families can further see the impact of recycling by visiting www.ctrecyclomatic.org and www.ctrecyclometer.org. Other highlights of the museum include a craft room where kids can decorate masks made from paperboard, and the temple of trash which greets you as you walk through the door.

For more information on the CRRA Trash Museum, call 860-757-7765 or www.crra.org.

This story appeared in at least 13 zoned editions of the
ReminderNews.

This item appeared in at least eight zoned editions of the ReminderNews.

What are you doing this summer? Share it with the paper!

By JOAN HUNT
Managing Editor

Here at the *ReminderNews*, we are taking our down time seriously this summer, heading to the beach on the weekends, attending free summer concerts, barbecues with families and friends and enjoying some of the great festivals taking place in the towns we cover.

Now that school is out, we are pretty sure that our read-

ers and their families are doing the same. It occurred to us that we might share some of our experiences and add to the enjoyment of summer at the same time.

Each week until late August, we will be featuring a "day tripping" story about a place nearby in Connecticut where there are interesting things for families to do (check out the story about the Hartford Trash Museum in this issue). On this summer kids' page, we will in-

clude suggested activities for kids, photos of things kids are doing in your local community and samples of artwork that we are hoping our readers' families will share with us throughout the summer.

Use this page as a resource for ideas and also as a forum for posting photos and art which can be as diverse as a sidewalk chalk drawing, a craft project or a drawing or painting. (Please include the child's name - last name optional -

age, and what town you live in when submitting artwork or photos of artwork.)

Parents or caregivers who have come up with a really cool activity, party idea or other summer pastime are also encouraged to share that information with other readers through this page. If your child read a book he or she really loved, encourage them to write a few words about it to share with others.

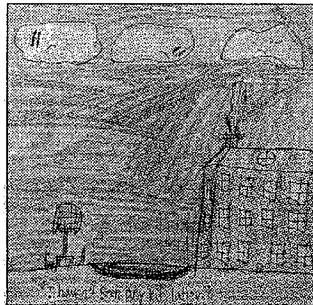
We are hoping that even on

those days of deep summer often referred to as "dog days" (possibly because even the family dog has had so much togetherness by then that it has become allergic to each individual hair on its body) something on this page will come to the rescue or at least provoke a smile.

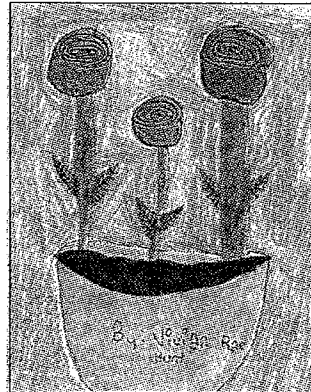
E-mail your submissions to me at jhunt@remindernet.com or mail them to Joan Hunt, ReminderNews, 130 Old Town Road, Vernon, CT 06066.

Creative Corner

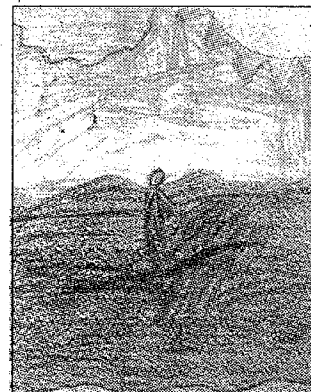
Kids show off their art



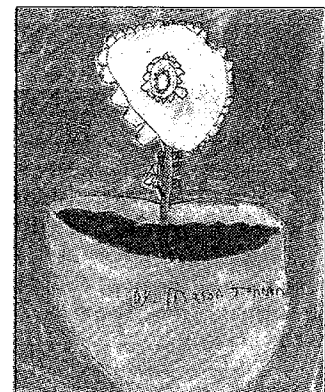
Leandro Arenas, 10, of Manchester- cartoon



Vivian Hunt, 9, of Manchester



Bradley Maxwell, 5, of Manchester



Mason Johnson, 7, of South Windsor



SOUTHBURY VOICES WEEKENDER
6/22/2013

Calendar

MUSEUMS

CRRA Trash Museum, 211
Murphy Rd., Hartford. Perma-
nent exhibits include Temple of
Trash, a mural by Ted Esselstyn,
and a display of a year's worth of
trash. The museum offers a sky-
box view of the adjacent recy-
cling processing center. Free
admission. Group tours available
by appointment. Info: 860-757-
7765 or [www.crra.org/pages/
Trash_Museum.htm](http://www.crra.org/pages/Trash_Museum.htm).

LITCHFIELD COUNTY TIMES
7/5/2013



Laurie Gaboardi

Tina Nelson of Thomaston had a lot to recycle last Saturday during CRRA's Electronics Recycling Collection held at Litchfield High School.

DAILY DIGEST

TORRINGTON

Supposed silver theft was a misunderstanding

Police spent about 30 minutes searching downtown for a man wearing a yellow shirt Friday afternoon after employees of the Salvation Army said he stole a silver tea set from the store, but the whole incident turned out to be a misunderstanding, police said.

Lt. Bruce Whitey said the man with the yellow shirt was helping a donor carry items into the store when he remarked he liked the silver piece.

The donor gave the piece to the man, who then left, Whitey said. "The store thought he had run off with it," Whitey said. "It is a misunderstanding."

The man was not charged and police did not release his name.

Michael D'Amato, a store employee, said the man has been banned from the store.

NEW MILFORD

Dump truck strikes, kills bear crossing Route 7

A black bear crossing Route 7 was struck and killed by a dump truck Friday afternoon.

Dwayne Gardner, a Department of Energy and Environmental Protection spokesman, said the 400-pound bear, estimated to be about 5 years old, ran in front of the truck, and the driver was unable to stop in time.

Black bears, the state's largest predator that is showing up more regularly to feast on bird feeders and in trash cans, number between 500 and 1,000 statewide, Gardner said.

Each year about 25 are hit and killed by vehicles when they are most active in the late spring and early summer.

Gardner said the driver was not hurt in the 1 p.m. accident near the Brookfield town line on the four-lane road.

Gardner said the bear's carcass, which was loaded onto a truck with a forklift, was taken to the Session Woods Wildlife Management Area in Burlington to be studied.

PLYMOUTH

Town hoping to hire deputy fire marshal

The town, after losing two deputy fire marshals this year due to resignations, is seeking to fill one of the positions.

According to an ad on the town website, the town is seeking a part-time deputy fire marshal to work under Fire Marshal Charles Doback Jr. The employee would work 10 hours a week and be paid \$17.03 hourly.

Deputy Fire Marshals Kevin Engle and Victor J. Gara both resigned last year. Gara said he left to focus on his work as a Bristol fire and police dispatcher and to take care of a sick family member and Engle quit because he was tired of the town's politics.

Engle served as acting fire marshal for three years, while former Fire Marshal John F. Schubert was investigated, reinstated and then quit after suing the town, but he was passed over for the permanent job.

The Board of Fire Commissioners will interview candidates.

Applications are due July 9.

LITCHFIELD SUPERIOR COURT

Man charged with attempting to choke woman outside bar

Christopher Dubey, 24, of Horn Avenue in Winsted, was arraigned on domestic violence charges in Bantam Court Friday after police say he attempted to choke a woman outside the Billiards Bar on Winsted Road just before midnight Thursday.

The woman who claimed he choked her, April MacLeod, 25, also was arrested. Both were charged with third-degree assault and breach of peace.

Judge Richard M. Marano ordered Dubey to have no contact with MacLeod. The two had been dating for several weeks, police said.

LITCHFIELD

CRRA collecting electronics today for recycling

An electronics recycling collection open to residents of towns that participate in the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority's (CRRA) Connecticut Solid Waste System will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. today at Litchfield High School, 14 Plumb Hill Road.

Participating towns include Barkhamsted, Beacon Falls, Bethlehem, Canaan, Colebrook, Cornwall, Goshen, Harwinton, Litchfield, Middlebury, Naugatuck, New Hartford, Norfolk, Oxford, Roxbury, Salisbury, Sharon, Thomaston, Torrington, Waterbury, Watertown, Winchester and Woodbury. Additional collections may be scheduled.

The complete schedule is available at www.crra.org/pages/schedule_electronics.

STATE

Rowland leftover resolved

The CRRA has agreed to settle a dispute over the expenses of a former lobbyist. **Page 10**

CRRA strikes deal with former lobbyist

By Don Michak

Journal Inquirer

The state trash authority has agreed to settle a dispute over tens of thousands of dollars in reimbursements to its former lobbyist, who wined and dined corrupt former Gov. John G. Rowland and his political cronies.

Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority President Thomas D. Kirk said today that he has yet to negotiate exactly how much money the lobbyist, Linda A. Kowalski, would be permitted to keep out of the \$20,000 state ethics officials required her to deposit in an escrow account in 2005.

But he said the CRRA's board of directors had decided in May to settle the disagreement over the lobbyists' questionable expenses rather than be forced into a potentially costly arbitration proceeding threatened by her lawyer.

"Short of going to arbitration, we don't see any way of doing this for less money than making a settlement," Kirk said. "We don't want to spend \$50,000 on an arbitration court case."

Kirk said he presumed a deal with

Kowalski would have to be approved by the state attorney general. He said the attorney general has been acting as the CRRA's lawyer in connection with the Rowland administration scandal spawned years ago by the quasi-public agency's spectacularly failed \$220 million deal with the now-defunct Enron Corp.

He said he didn't know if a settlement also would have to pass muster with the Office of State Ethics, the successor to the State Ethics Commission. The commission eight years ago had ordered Kowalski to establish the escrow account when it also required her to pay a \$25,000 civil penalty and accept stringent reporting rules over a three-year period.

Kowalski, who in 1990 paid \$50,000 to settle an ethics complaint in connection with her lobbying for the Connecticut Retail Merchants Association, agreed to settle the complaint in 2005 without admitting any wrongdoing. But she didn't contest an ethics panel finding that there was probable cause she had violated its rules.

The commission's investigators had found that Kowalski spent thousands of dollars on behalf of CRRA and other

clients at hotels, restaurants, and pubs in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington, D.C., as well as in Canada and Puerto Rico.

For at least part of the time when she made those expenditures, the lobbyist was helping Rowland solicit donors to the Republican Governors Association, a partisan political organization the ex-governor headed after the 2001 terrorist attacks.

Rowland, however, shunned Kowalski after she was ensnared in the controversy over the deal with Enron, which had made \$80,000 in contributions to an RGA committee just days after Rowland took the reins of the organization.

The CRRA was then headed by Rowland's co-chief of staff, Peter N. Ellef, who like Rowland was imprisoned after his conviction on federal corruption charges.

Officials at the CRRA questioned about \$22,000 out of the approximately \$27,000 in expenses Kowalski had submitted while working for it in 2001 and 2002.

■ SEE CRRA / PAGE 12

Lobbyist's lawyer says expenses approved by CRRA

■ CRRA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

The lobbyist's lawyer, R. Bartley Halloran, has protested that there wasn't a single charge for meals that wasn't authorized by CRRA officials and that all of the expenses were related to agency business.

He also has insisted that his client had nothing to do with the Enron fiasco.

Kowalski's expense records showed that CRRA's payments to

her covered dinners she provided to influential members of the Rowland administration, including its chiefs of staff, legal counsel, and state budget director as well as top Republican Party figures close to the governor.

They revealed, for example, that the CRRA paid a \$914 tab from a Washington, D.C., saloon for a 40th birthday party honoring Rowland's former staff chief and director of communications.

STATE

CRRA in the hot seat

Lawmakers have passed a law that requires the agency to undergo an audit and plan for long-term stability. **Page 3**

Burning money: State balks at bailout for CRRA

By Ed Jacovino
Journal Inquirer

HARTFORD — The state has changed its approach to the financially strapped Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority in the past year.

While state officials at first pledged to help the quasi-public agency, they now have ordered the CRRA to figure out how to make money off its garbage-to-energy plant or face "dissolution."

That's putting the trash and recycling agency — as well as the towns it serves, which include Manchester, South Windsor, Tolland, and Ellington — in a tough position.

"There are a lot of unknowns out there right now," said CRRA board Chairman Donald Stein, who's also the first selectman in Barkhamsted. "But I definitely wouldn't write us off yet."

In June 2012 Macky McCleary, deputy commissioner of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, visited the CRRA office in Hartford with his proposal to prop up the struggling agency.

The state would buy electricity created by CRRA's plant at a higher rate — a short-term solution to keep the plant in business, McCleary said. He hoped to have something decided by fall 2012.

But that plan was abandoned. So was another for the CRRA to get what is essentially a better magnet, capable of separating more metals that can be sold for scrap or recycled before they go into the CRRA incinerator.

Then the state considered increasing subsidies for the trash-to-energy electricity and treating it more like solar or wind power. That didn't happen either.

Instead, the legislature passed a law to require a thorough audit of CRRA, with CRRA paying up to

\$500,000 for the review.

The law also created a task force to study the operations, financial stability, and business models of CRRA and other trash-to-energy plants. And it required CRRA to come up with a transition plan for "long-term financial stability" or "dissolution."

Gov. Dannel P. Malloy, a Democrat, signed the law this month.

Less money, fewer customers

The problem for CRRA is that its long-term contracts for selling power ended in the past several years. Utility companies had been buying the power for about 8.5 cents per kilowatt-hour. They now pay about 3.5 cents.

And several area towns have abandoned CRRA in that time, finding cheaper rates for trash disposal elsewhere.

Since then, CRRA essentially has been burning money. Its energy plant cost \$3.5 million to operate but brought in only \$1.1 million in the quarter that ended June 30, according to its most recent financial report. The plant finished the last fiscal year with a \$12 million operating loss, the report shows.

By law, CRRA can't operate at a deficit. So it has balanced the books by cutting back on upgrades and maintenance. The authority closed the year that ended in June 2012 with a \$909,000 surplus, but its capital assets depreciated by \$15.8 million in just that year.

The last time CRRA had an operating surplus was in 2008.

CRRA officials say the new law indicates a lack of trust in their agency, which state lawmakers created in 1973.

Republicans have led the agency's governing board for the past several years and the CRRA is fighting in court with the Democrat-aligned Metropolitan District Commission, which until 2011 held the contract to operate



Jim Michaud / Journal Inquirer

A payloador moves waste that has just come into the CRRA trash-to-energy plant on Maxim Road in Hartford.

CRRA's garbage sorting facility.

The CRRA also is still smarting from an unsecured loan to the now-defunct Enron Corp. in 2001 that cost it \$220 million.

Luke Bronin, Malloy's general counsel and a top policy adviser, said those issues didn't factor into the passage of the new law. And he said state officials don't want to force CRRA to sell or shut down, but want more information before they decide how to move forward.

"We have always been of the view that CRRA needs to do a thorough review of its finances and a thorough review of its business plan," Bronin said, later adding: "Before we enter into any agreements to purchase electricity, we want to see any results of these examinations."

CRRA officials hesitate to criticize lawmakers and Malloy for moving slowly. But they also say they can't continue cutting costs and deferring maintenance to balance the books.

A foundering technology?

Other privately owned trash-to-energy plants around the state aren't feeling the pinch yet. Many of their old contracts are still in place, and they use a newer, more efficient technology than CRRA's mid-Connecticut plant in Hartford, officials say.

"There are issues of economy for all of the plants," the CRRA's chief

operating officer, Thomas D. Kirk, said. "CRRA is first in line because of our technology."

Kirk didn't criticize the state for the delay in helping out, but he quipped about the new audit. "We're a walking audit target and that's fine," he said. "If the state were investing, they should do their due diligence."

The state auditors recently finished their audit, and CRRA's independent auditor started work recently as well. Now the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection also will audit the agency under the new law, leaving CRRA with an up to \$500,000 pricetag.

It's an issue of cost vs. benefit. And that leaves state officials to decide what to do with its garbage — burn it for energy at a cost, or ship it out of state to be buried in landfills elsewhere.

Kirk wants the electricity generated from CRRA's plant to count as a more renewable energy form, allowing it to be sold at a subsidized price.

"This is affordable, renewable energy important to the state, and it has the benefit of serving the environmental solid waste interests of the state," he said.

The uncertainty also affects the towns that pay CRRA to get rid of their trash.

"We don't know if CRRA's going

to be able to continue to be in that business," Manchester Town Manager and CRRA board member Scott Shanley said. "That creates a level of uncertainty for us."

Shanley described CRRA as in a business in flux. The long-term contracts with electricity companies kept CRRA's future secure. But CRRA also has contracts with towns, which pay the agency to collect and burn their garbage and handle recycling.

Now, those municipal contracts are coming up too. Some are leaving CRRA for other trash-to-energy plants, such as one in Windham. All are signing on to shorter contracts.

Manchester, for example, explored another trash option through the Capitol Region Council of Governments. The town signed a three-year deal with CRRA for trash in 2012, but went with another company for recycling.

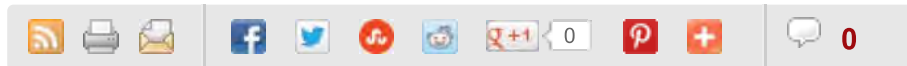
"We seem to be moving from business crisis to business crisis, with no long-term vision for what CRRA needs to be going forward," Shanley said.

Stein said he hopes the new law — with its task force and audit — will keep CRRA in business.

"If this is what it takes to secure the future for not just CRRA but solid waste disposal and environmentally conscious ... disposal in the state, then I'm supporting it," the CRRA chairman said.

Jim Hayden appointed to CRRA board

Published: Thursday, July 18, 2013



By **SCOT ALLYN**
 For the Granby News
scotallyn@registercitizen.com

EAST GRANBY — Jim Hayden, first selectman of East Granby, has been appointed by Gov. Dannel Malloy to the board of directors of the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority.

Hayden said he was appointed in May to a three-year term and has attended three board meetings.

“It’s going well,” he said. “I’m learning an awful lot. The CRRA is going through the process of determining what they are going to be as a quasi-public agency. The state legislature has requested input, and the governor’s office it also involved. It’s an ongoing look by the legislature on municipal solid waste disposal.”

Don Stein, first selectman of Barkhamsted, recommended Hayden for the vacancy on the CRRA board. Stein is chairman of the CRRA board, which has 11 full members and four ad hoc members.

“We’ve tried to increase participation on the board by chief elected officials,” Stein said. “I’ve worked with Jim on other activities, and he’s a very involved, very active person. I thought with his personal qualities, he would be a good addition.”

Stein said he has worked with Hayden on town insurance issues for workers’ compensation and liability, and common issues of towns along the Farmington River.

Hayden said solid waste disposal may not be glamorous, but is still important.

“Solid waste disposal is one of those things you only notice when it doesn’t work,” he said. “Everything works right now. Here in East Granby we are trying to keep an eye on costs, because any CRRA cost increase would have a financial impact on us. As part of the CRRA board, and East Granby first selectman, I hope to assist CRRA towards its long-term goals.”



Photo by Scot Allyn. Jim Hayden, first selectman of East Granby, has been appointed by Gov. Malloy to the board of directors of the Connecticut Resource Recovery Authority.

 [View and purchase photos](#)



Covanta gets DEEP staff OK for Preston air permits renewal

Solid waste facility permit renewed for 10 years in June

By **JAMES MOSHER**

The Bulletin

Posted Aug 02, 2013 @ 05:16 PM

Last update Aug 02, 2013 @ 05:20 PM

Business News

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[You Can Still Squeeze In a Cheap Summer Vacation](#)

Preston, Conn. — Covanta Energy Corp.'s air permits for the Preston garbage incinerator/power plant have received state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection staff approval for renewal.

The approval is the first step for renewing permits under Title V of U.S. Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, DEEP spokesman Dennis Schain said Friday. Covanta received a "tentative determination" and a public comment period is under way, he said. The comments will be considered in deciding whether to issue a final renewals, the DEEP spokesman said.

Morristown, N.J.-based Covanta, whose holdings include 44 trash-to-energy plants, recently received a 10-year renewal of its permit to operate Preston as a solid waste facility. That renewal was issued June 20, Schain said. There were no changes in operations that accompanied the renewal, he said.

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courant.com/business/hc-montville-biomass-renewable-20130805,0,5528182.story

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Montville Biomass Plant, One Bid For Energy Contract

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By BRIAN DOWLING, bdowling@courant.com

The Hartford Courant

6:07 PM EDT, August 5, 2013

MONTVILLE — A shot at a long-term contract is reviving a renewable energy project here that has spent the last few years idling.

The project — 42 megawatts of power from biomass, 2.3 megawatts from solar, and 5.6 megawatts from fuel cells — is one of many projects submitted Monday in response to a call from the state energy department for contracted renewable energy.

Other projects include: at least five wind turbine projects in Maine and New Hampshire, a 28-megawatt fuel cell park in Killingly, and a Connecticut-based solar project.

The developer of the Montville renewable energy park, NRG Energy Inc., expanded its initial plans to just convert an old coal boiler. The new plans include a solar farm and some fuel cells, a diversity the company says will aid it in its bid for a long-term renewable energy contract with the state that it filed Monday.

"This is the legacy of Connecticut's electricity generation behind us," said John Baylor, NRG Energy's senior director of development and head of the Montville project, standing in front of the old, riverside power plant behind him.

"This," he said, pointing at the new project plans, "is our future."

The state's step into contracting renewable energy projects signals a continuation of its proactive approach to developing renewable power through programs like its low- and zero-emissions subsidy programs.

Until now, the state's electric companies mostly ran the clean energy purchasing through a market, where supply

and demand on any given day dictated the amount of subsidy a solar farm or fuel cell park could get. For some, like NRG, the uncertainty made getting financing difficult, if not impossible.

Baylor said that without a long-term power contract, financing for the more than \$100 million project wasn't possible. The end of state's Project 150 clean energy contract program closed that door. And last year, an attempt to lock in a power purchase contract as a stipulation to Northeast Utilities' merger with NSTAR failed.

"This is the first opportunity we have to bid into a contract," Baylor said.

Adding some certainty for developers through a long-term contract, the approach mirrors one Massachusetts launched in late 2010, when the state directed its electric distribution companies to enter into long-term power agreements for clean energy rather than buying the energy off the oftentimes volatile markets.

Criteria for acceptance of the bids, like NRG's, focus on dollars and cents — in the end, a determination of how much of a subsidy the projects will need. Viability and reliability of the project also play a significant part in the application. The latter item on the bid could favor Connecticut projects that rely on fewer miles of transmission lines.

Developers plan to convert an old coal steam unit that currently burns oil and gas into a biomass unit, which would run on locally harvested wood from tree trimmings, foresters and sawmills. The finished biomass boiler, though set to create 42 megawatts of electricity, will still be able to burn oil or gas when higher outputs are needed. In those cases, the unit could generate 82 megawatts.

According to NRG estimates, the 80 miles surrounding the Montville park could supply some 2.3 million tons of wood annually. The station would need about 400,000 tons to operate at full bore. The biomass conversion and operation, the company said, would add up to 200 jobs to the local and regional economy.

The fuel cells would also be locally grown, so to speak, by FuelCell Energy Inc., which manufactures its products in Torrington and is headquartered in Danbury.

The company is bidding to develop the Killingly fuel cell park, which, if accepted, would be the second largest in the world. The world's largest, also a FuelCell Energy project, is under construction in South Korea.

Decisions on the bids are expected to be made by Aug. 20, with contract negotiations and regulator approval expected to stretch into mid-October.

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Town's single-stream recycling increases from 151 to 309 tons

By Megan Spicer

Over the course of the last year, the amount of single-stream recycling has doubled from 151 tons recycled in May 2012 to 309 tons recycled in May 2013, according to data from the Transfer Station Advisory Committee.

"This does show that our community is interested in recycling," said Dot Kelly, chairman of the Transfer Station Advisory Committee and a Representative Town Meeting member.

The greatest jump in the amount recycled was from April 2013 to May 2013. In April 2013, 191 tons of material was recycled,

then increased to 309 tons recycled in May 2013.

"We're hoping next month is just as good," Kelly said.

Since the launch in May 2012, the tons recycled hovered around 150 tons each month, reaching a peak of 168 tons before April 2012, which was an increase from the months leading up to its launch when roughly 100 tons were being recycled.

The single-stream campaign was launched in May 2012, after the advisory committee indicated that the purpose of single-stream recycling was to increase recycling in town. Recycling is a state-mandated law.

With single-stream, all recycling can be mixed together, but

there are some rules that must be followed for the program to run cleanly.

One rule requires that the recycling be loose. If it's in a plastic bag, the handlers who sort the recycling must slit it open. In some places, like Bridgeport, sanitation workers will simply not take recycling that remains bagged.

Another rule is that recycling must be clean of food for fear of rodents. At a January Representative Town Meeting, Kelly said if there is cheese in pizza boxes and peanut butter left in jars, those items are better off thrown in the garbage.

Single-stream recycling helps reduce the cost of waste disposal to the tune of about \$100 per ton, according to Kelly.

According to the state Department of Energy & Environmental Protection, switching to single-stream recycling reduces costs for trash haulers and results in more items being collected. Currently, about 65 cities and towns in Connecticut, including Stamford, Hartford and New Haven, participate in single-stream recycling, according to the DEEP website. However, it was noted residents should be educated about what items can be recycled and how to prepare the items for pickup.

The steady increases in recycling were expected, however

When the Connecticut Resources Recycling Authority launched single-stream recycling into its Mid-Connecticut Project, which encompasses 50 municipalities, the amount of total recycling in the towns increased from 9 percent in 2008 to 11.5 percent in 2012.

The move to townwide single-stream recycling was made last year. The facility that processes Darien's trash had been doing single-stream a year prior to Darien joining.

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Not all residents use wheeled bins as directed on first day of single-stream recycling

By **ROBERT KOCH**

Hour Staff Writer | Posted: Monday, July 1, 2013 10:02 pm

NORWALK -- By 10 a.m. Monday, a City Carting & Recycling, Inc., truck had made its way down Betmarlea Road near Fox Run Elementary School as part of the first day of single-stream recycling in Norwalk.

"I watched them empty mine and I saw two others emptied," said Linda B. Forcellina, co-president of the West Norwalk Association. "We're used to putting our recycling out in the street so this is no change for us."

Forcellina said she appreciated being able to place her household recyclables in one container. The new 64-gallon wheeled bins, although large, are convenient, she said.

Monday marked the first day of the city's transition from sorted recycling to a single-stream system where glass, paper and metal are all placed in newly distributed 64-gallon wheeled totes. The process is intended to encourage recycling, reduce the cost of hauling away garbage and increase revenues which the city receives for recyclables.

City Carting & Recycling, the Stamford company hired by the city to pick up residents' trash and recyclables, hit its Monday route, which encompasses West Norwalk and areas reaching as far east as the Spring Hill neighborhood.

"We ran longer than our normal day, but that's to be expected with our new system," said Bryan Ayres, City Carting's municipal solid-waste manager for Norwalk. "The weather didn't do us any favors with the downpours we had. The bad weather slows the operation down completely."

Still, Ayres anticipated that the four trucks assigned to the area would complete their routes by 3 p.m. He wouldn't venture a guess on how many of the roughly 6,000 households placed their recyclables out on the first day of single-stream recycling, nor how much tonnage was picked up.

In the Spring Hill area, a number of households placed their recyclables curbside in the old 18-gallon blue bins. Those bins were not emptied, according to Director of Public Works Harold F. Alvord.

"There's always people that don't get the word or aren't paying attention," Alvord said. "We've asked City Carting to make sure they sticker those, that they're not being picked up, that's it's time to use the (new 64-gallon) carts."

As of Saturday, more than 28,000 of the wheeled carts had been delivered to households, he said.

Alvord said it will probably take three days for officials to better gauge how the transition to single-stream recycling went.

Pickup Tuesday will be in the South Norwalk area, west of the harbor and south of Interstate 95.

The new 64-gallon bins are picked up and emptied mechanically. As such, residents are asked to place them curbside with the lid opening facing outward toward the street.

Residents whose recyclables are not collected on their scheduled pickup date should call the city's Customer Service Center at (203) 854-3200.

NEW HAVEN REGISTER
7/14/2013

NORTH HAVEN

Town enjoys \$1M surplus

By Michael Bellmore
mbellmore@nhregister.com
@bandango on Twitter

NORTH HAVEN » After the books were balanced, the town found it had a surplus of more than \$1 million.

Though the budget for this fiscal year, which began July 1 is set, the extra funds will help keep next year's tax rate lower. "My commitment is to use this in next year's budget to offset expenses and taxes," First Selectman Michael J. Freda said.

Freda said the town budget incurred a \$98,527.90 surplus at the end of last year's fiscal year. He said the surplus is an accomplishment because of the overtime because of a hurricane and major blizzard.

The rest of the surplus came from unanticipated, one-time gains.

Freda said the town received \$116,000 in Federal Emergency Management Agency funds. The town received \$125,000 from a tax lien sale on a Powdered Metals Drive property.

Freda said the town received nearly 100 percent of back taxes owed on the derelict property. The hope is the property will soon be fixed up and put to good use, the first selectman said.

Freda said the town's former trash repository company CRRA. The town received a refund of \$95,000 after closing out the account with its former trash repository company. The town also received \$240,000 in back taxes from East Brown Associates.

North Haven Ends Fiscal Year with Surplus

By Marji McClure
Courier Staff Writer

North Haven's finances for the 2012-'13 fiscal year closed \$98,000 under budget.

At the July 11 Board of Selectmen meeting, First Selectman Michael Freda announced that the town budget for the last fiscal year came in exactly \$98,527.90 under budget.

Despite extraordinary expenses, such as those for storm clean-ups, the town was able to end the year on the plus side.

"It's a true testament to the department heads as they manage their independent areas," said Freda, who is seeking re-election in November.

Freda added that the town also posted an unanticipated revenue gain of more than

\$900,000. Those gains were obtained from a variety of sources. The town was reimbursed \$116,000 by FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) for storm-related expenses.

North Haven also negotiated a tax lien sale on a printing company formerly located on Powdered Metals Drive. Freda explained that the town was owed \$125,000 in back taxes.

See NORTH HAVEN page 10

North Haven Ends Fiscal Year with Surplus

Continued from page 1

company purchased the tax lien and will develop the property.

"We now have the opportunity to restore this building to a productive business," said Freda.

Freda has been named chairman of the Covanta board. Covanta manages North Haven's waste processes, along with those of several neighboring towns.

There was money left in an escrow account from former provider CRRRA (Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority), and North Haven's share of the refund was \$95,000.

Quinnipiac University's purchase of the McMahon property on Kings Highway, a vacant parcel, yielded North Haven \$240,000 in back taxes. Arrears taxes totaled

\$100,000, and miscellaneous revenue totaled \$116,000. All of those revenues total \$916,000.

"When you take this and add it to the deficit, we'll end up with a million-dollar surplus," said Freda.

Freda explained the surplus would offset taxes in 2015. He explained that it can't be applied toward the current fiscal year's budget.

"When you have a referendum in May and when you close the books in June, it gets applied toward the following fiscal year," said Freda.

"We came in less than the expense model," added Freda. "We are in fine shape here in North Haven."



Sunday, July 21, 2013 5:06 PM EDT

Morris recycling center set to accept paint products

BY JOHN MCKENNA REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

MORRIS — Add paint products to the list of items the town's recycling center and trash transfer station is accepting for recycling.

The town has joined a growing list of communities taking advantage of the Connecticut Paint Stewardship Program established by paint manufacturers in response to the Paint Stewardship Law passed by the legislature in 2011. Connecticut is the third state to pass such a law, joining California and Oregon.

An assessment fee on all paint products sold in Connecticut beginning July 1 is funding the program, which is administered by PaintCare Inc., a nonprofit established by the American Coatings Association.

Sam Luchene, foreman at the Morris facility, briefed the Board of Selectmen on the program on Tuesday and by Friday afternoon had signs and storage bins in place in preparation for the start of the program on Saturday. The signs and bins, along with a brochure explaining the program, were provided by PaintCare Inc.

"It's more work for us, but I couldn't see not doing it," Luchene said Friday. "Everyone has paint they'd like to get rid of. Now they can do it here, for free."

PaintCare Inc. will collect the paint products and transport them to a recycling facility, at no cost to the town. The nonprofit has also provided the town with spill kits to clean up paint that spills before being placed in the storage bins located in the new building at the recycling center and trash transfer station.

The program helps the town save money by keeping paint out of the solid waste stream and lowering waste tonnage. Convenience is another bonus, as residents no longer have to wait for periodic regional household hazardous waste collection days.

"It's another great service for our residents and I thank (Luchene) for pulling it together," First Selectman Barbara Bongiolatti said. "The recycling center has come a long way and I'm amazed at how much we recycle."

Paint products being accepted at the recycling center are latex, acrylic, water-based, oil-based and enamel coatings; deck and floor paints; primers, sealers and under coat products; stains; shellacs, lacquers, varnishes and urethanes; concrete and masonry waterproofing products; wood sealers and repellents; metal coatings and rust preventatives; and field and lawn paints.

Residents are allowed to drop off five gallons of paint per day. All paint must be in original containers.

with original labels. Latex paint that is dried out and hard is also being accepted.

For information, go to www.townofmorrisct.org.

Contact John McKenna at jmckenna33@optonline.net

TRASH TALK

Covanta inks deal with Waterbury

By Luther Turmelle
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@LutherTurmelle on Twitter

WATERBURY » The New Jersey-based company that operates three trash-to-energy plants in Connecticut, including one in Wallingford, has lured another community away from the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority.

Covanta Energy signed a five-year deal with the city of Waterbury, which went into effect Monday. The company will handle both the 40,000 tons of municipal waste that the city produces, as well as 5,000 tons of recyclables.

"After a considerable amount of due diligence and negotiation, we are confident that Covanta will be an excellent partner and service provider to the city of Waterbury," Mayor Neil O'Leary said in a statement. "The new agreement saves taxpayers at least \$2 million and we will be handling our waste in a sustainable manner by utilizing Covanta's Energy-from-Waste facilities and recycling services instead of land filling."

Waterbury will be served by Covanta's Bristol facility. In addition to the Wallingford and Bristol facilities, Covanta also operates a trash-to-energy plant in Preston.

Because it included recycling in its deal, the city was able to save money both on direct disposal costs as well as getting rebate credits for the amount of material it is able to recycle, according to company officials.

"Covanta is proud to be able to now provide our services to the city of Waterbury, a well-respected and leading city in Connecticut," said Steve Diaz, vice president and regional business manager for Connecticut.

Waterbury become the 10th Connecticut community that Covanta has lured away from CRRA since the end of 2011, including Guilford and Madison in Greater New Haven.

The power produced by Covanta's three trash-to-energy plants provides energy for more than 34,000 homes in the state. The company operates 44 trash-to-energy plants in all.

Finding Volunteers for Commissions Is A Task That's Easier Said Than Done

by Christine Stuart | Jul 25, 2013 1:00pm

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CHRISTINE STUART PHOTO

| One of the file folders of past boards, commissions, and task forces in the Legislative Library

The saying goes that when the legislature doesn't want to take action on an issue or needs more time to think about a public policy it appoints a task force, board, or commission to study the issue. But keeping up with thousands of appointments to hundreds of boards, task forces, and commissions isn't easy for leaders of either political party.

"I have at least a thousand," House Minority Leader Lawrence Cafero, R-Norwalk, said citing the number of appointments he has to make.

This year alone the legislature created 30 boards, including the Child Obesity Task Force, a Commission on Connecticut's Future, and a Funeral Service Task Force. Gov. Dannel P. Malloy did veto a bill that created a Bail Bonds Task Force, bringing the total number of boards down to 29. The legislature also eliminated 11 boards that weren't active. But there still are hundreds more that are active, or somewhat active.

Sometimes it's "extremely difficult to find people" to sit on the board, Cafero

said.

It's also difficult to find a volunteer who fits the job description in statute. For example, Cafero needs to appoint a "parent of a child that was involved in the juvenile justice system," to the Juvenile Jurisdiction Policy and Operations Coordinating Council. He's required to appoint a person with "experience in business and science related to healthcare delivery, medical devices, life sciences, insurance or information technology" to the Bioscience Innovation Advisory Committee, and he must find a person from New London County to appoint to the African American Affairs Commission. Each legislative leader has different criteria it must meet when they make appointments to the various boards.

"It's so difficult to find people to serve," Cafero said.

When an opening arises he emails his caucus to see if they know if anyone would be interested in serving. It's the same tactic Sen. President Donald Williams, House Speaker Brendan Sharkey, and Sen. Minority John McKinney take when they are looking to fill vacancies.

Sen. Majority Leader Martin Looney said sometimes filling these positions is a challenge, because sometimes people come forward to volunteer and other times "you have to scour everywhere trying to get someone to serve."

When individuals volunteer to sit on a board it makes things easy for lawmakers. Recently, **Jim Cameron of Darien**, who was on the former Metro North Commuter Rail Council, asked Cafero if he would appoint him to the new Connecticut Rail Commuter Council. Cafero said the decision to appoint Cameron was fairly simple. He had already served 18 years on the Metro North Commuter Rail Council, so he was uniquely qualified to sit on the new board that will tackle a wider range of train service issues across the state.

Other appointments aren't as easy to make and it's almost impossible for legislative leaders to know everyone personally. Most receive resumes and recommendations and hope the appointee doesn't embarrass them.

"I have people come up to me all the time and thank me for appointing them to this commission or that commission, and I have no idea who they are," Cafero said.

According to information provided by the four caucuses and Malloy's office, there are more than 200 active commissions, councils, task forces, and boards which require legislative leadership or gubernatorial appointments. The governor alone has 1,600 appointments he needs to make to 232 commissions, and House Speaker Brendan Sharkey has 1,465 appointments to make to around 200 boards and commissions. The appointments come at various times during the year and there are staff whose only job is to keep track of the information and vacancies.

But it's easier said than done.

State officials **blew past their deadline** to appoint volunteers to a task force that will weigh exemptions to the Freedom of Information Act that were carved out by the legislature in response to the Newtown shootings. The 17-member task force was supposed to be named by July 1.

Currently, there are so few commissioners on the State Elections Enforcement Commission that Stephen Cashman, who retired in December, has remained a member of the commission until a replacement is found.

Cashman was appointed 13 years ago by Robert Ward, Cafero's predecessor. Cafero said he was unaware that Cashman had retired. In a phone interview, Cashman said that he was going to send another letter to Cafero to remind him of his retirement.

"If nothing happens in the next four or five months . . . Let's just say this stuff is not easily picked up," Cashman said of the commissions' work.

The five-member commission is busiest during the statewide election cycles when they must approve all the Citizens' Election Program applications for public funds. Cashman said that's why he stepped down after the 2012 election to make sure there was time to fill the vacancy.

Joan Jenkins, a commissioner appointed in 2007 by Kevin Sullivan, died earlier this month. Her term also had expired, but she continued to serve until her death. In addition, Commissioner Richard Bozzuto's term expired last year. He was appointed by Sen. Minority Leader John McKinney.

The three remaining commissioners include Cashman, Patricia Stankevicius, and

Anthony Castagno.

A spokesman for McKinney said he is close to naming someone to fill the position. A spokesman for Williams said he is currently reviewing names.

And while it can be argued by most that the State Elections Enforcement Commission is an active and important commission, the same can't be said for some of the other boards and commissions.

Cafero said some of the commissions never meet and never file a report to the legislature.

There are at least four file cabinet drawers in the legislative library's archives dedicated to the thousands of commissions and boards created over the years by the legislature. The new and old information about the various boards and appointments is currently being entered into a computer database, which also is located at the legislative library.

Connect with Christine:



Tags: [appointment](#), [boards](#), [commissions](#), [task force](#), [Lawrence Cafero](#), [Brendan Sharkey](#), [Gov. Dannel P. Malloy](#), [files](#), [dh](#)

Print this story, sponsored by America's Natural Gas.

2. SOLID WASTE:

Congress fuels debate over burning trash for energy

Emily Yehle, E&E reporter

Published: Monday, July 8, 2013

This story was updated at 9:17 a.m.

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — About 10 miles outside of Washington, D.C., on a road dotted with storage units, parking lots and the occasional townhouse community, Covanta Energy's "resource recovery" facility looks like just another nondescript office building.

But enter the front door, take a sniff and its purpose becomes clear: This is where trash comes to burn.

More specifically, it's where Congress sends its trash — about 5,000 tons every year of discarded coffee cups, empty chip bags, dirty plates and almost all the other refuse lawmakers, staffers and visitors toss daily. The 28-year-old facility then turns that into enough electricity to power about 250 homes.

The decision by House and Senate leaders to support such a facility has shone new light on an industry that has had trouble finding its niche. Is its place with conservatives, who are more likely to embrace established forms of energy production? Or liberals, who are pushing for more renewable energy use — yet often shun waste-to-energy as too dirty?



At Covanta Energy's waste-to-energy facility in Alexandria, Va., a claw drops trash into a combustion chamber, which will burn the waste at about 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. Photo by Emily Yehle.

"I'm not going to say we're perfect. But we're awful darn good," said Paul Gilman, a senior vice president with Covanta and the company's chief sustainability officer. "We set out to make energy from waste the cleanest, most reliable source of electricity."

Gilman, who was U.S. EPA's science adviser from 2002 to 2004, used graphs and statistics to set the stage for a plant tour and make a pitch: The country has a waste management problem, and facilities like Covanta are part of the solution.

Indeed, Americans generate about 250 million tons of trash each year. Eighty-seven million tons of that is recycled or composted. Most of the rest goes to landfills.

EPA considers burning waste for energy a better alternative to the landfill — and a tool to combat climate change. A 2008 study from the agency found that turning trash into energy

reduced carbon emissions by offsetting the need for energy from other sources — like coal — and reducing the amount of methane that trash produces when left to rot.

Gilman has turned that research into a tidy factoid: A ton of trash processed at a Covanta facility offsets a ton of greenhouse gas emissions.

But environmentalists aren't convinced. Several groups argue that trash-burning power plants emit pollutants such as mercury and lead, endangering those in the neighborhoods around them.

In 2011, the nonprofit Environmental Integrity Project released a report arguing that two facilities in Maryland — one of which is run by Covanta — emit more mercury, lead and other pollutants per hour of energy than the state's major coal-fired power plants.

On the whole, waste-to-energy facilities, which are small operations, emit far less particulate matter than large coal plants. In 2009, for example, three waste-to-energy facilities emitted 114 pounds of mercury of the 1,538 pounds emitted in Maryland.

'A question of material flow'

Allen Hershkowitz, a senior scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council, is one of the more moderate opponents to waste-to-energy facilities. His outlook parallels that of Covanta; namely, waste-to-energy facilities may have a place in the waste management, alongside recycling.

But he pushes back against the notion that the government should invest in them or that they are the primary solution to the landfill problem.

First, he said, the country needs to address the fact that 80 percent of what people throw away is recyclable -- and not very combustible.

"This is a question of material flow," he said. "What material do we have, and where do they belong?"

He points to a 2009 EPA study that found that municipal solid waste is primarily made up of materials that can be either recycled or composted.

Plastics, for example, take up about 12.3 percent of waste, while food scraps are 14.1 percent. Paper is 28.2 percent. Waste also includes significant amounts of metals, glass and yard waste.

"Waste incinerators, waste combustion should be reserved for nonrecyclable, noncompostable material," Hershkowitz said, later adding: "We have to just stop just taking oil and gas, turning it into a product, using it once and burning it."

But Gilman's outlook is that Americans today still send most of their refuse to landfills, which emit more greenhouse gases than waste-to-energy facilities and often require long-distance hauls from home to burial.

"Do we need more sustainable waste management? Yes. We're the first to say yes to that," he said.

But waste-to-energy is the best solution now, he said.

"Is there a perfect energy producer?" he said. "Everything has its downside."

Company plays up recycling

On a recent visit to the Covanta plant here, Mike Ranga, the facility's business manager, showed off the plant like a proud father -- one who was used to giving tours. He passed around a heavy pipe used to hold steam, invited visitors to look down on the flames of a 2,000-degree fire and took off his hard hat to demonstrate the suction of an air vent.

The company aims to engage communities, getting ahead of any negative perception. It not only offers tours to anyone interested, but also donates to local charities and sends employees to volunteer to pick up trash.

It's a policy that has proven successful in Alexandria; earlier this year, the Arlington County Board unanimously approved a new contract with the plant with the possibility of an extension until 2038.

The facility's process is straightforward on the surface: Trucks dump trash into a large room, where workers use giant claws to feed it into one of three combustion chambers. The heat produces steam, which powers turbines, which in turn produces electricity and returns it to the grid.

But all along the way are pollution controls, from dry-activated carbon for mercury to fabric filters that remove particulates.

In all, it's a noisy, hot, smelly process, albeit one that stays within the confines of the facility.

The trash that comes in is varied. Compact discs, tree branches, food, bottles: All were evident. In a small room, a 6-foot magnet separated a propane tank from the trash, dropping it into a large dumpster. On an average day, it pulls out four dumpsters of metal, which the company then sells.

Covanta officials tout the importance of recycling, asserting that the existence of waste-to-energy plants encourages recycling rather than replaces it. Indeed, in other countries like Germany, the two work hand in hand. And Alexandria has a high recycling rate compared to the national average.

That didn't, however, apply to Congress when it decided in 2011 to send most of its waste to Covanta. The House canceled a composting program put in place when the chamber was run by Democrats and reintroduced polystyrene containers, which are thrown away rather than recycled.

Former Rep. Dan Lungren (R-Calif.), who was then chairman of the House Administration Committee, pointed out that stocking the House's cafeterias with corn-based utensils and lugging waste to an on-site pulper cost \$475,000 annually,

while saving the carbon footprint equivalent of one car annually.

"EPA and several others have said that this kind of energy recovery is among the cheapest and most efficient there is," Lungren said at the time. "This is one of the woefully underutilized technologies in America. And if we can give a boost to a technology that is underutilized, that's an added benefit."

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Connecticut by the numbers



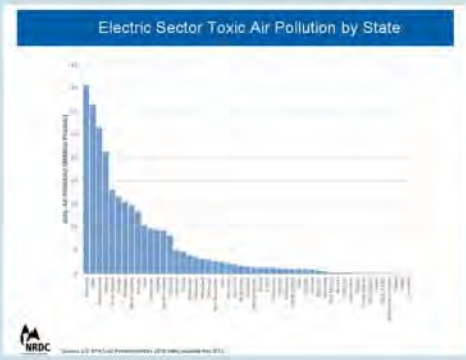
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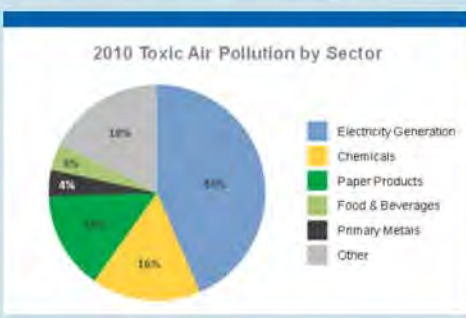
by CTBYTHENUMBERS.INFO on 08/11/2013 · in ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH

Residents of Kentucky, Ohio and Pennsylvania are exposed to more toxic air pollution from coal-fired power plants than in any other state, according to an analysis by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), leading the organization's "toxic 20."



At the same time, the report found a 19 percent decrease in all air toxics emitted from power plants in 2010, the most recent data available, compared to 2009 levels. **Connecticut ranks 42nd** in toxic air pollution and 43rd in mercury air pollution according to the newly released data, among the lowest levels in the nation.

The drop in toxic levels nationwide is attributed to two factors: the increasing use by power companies of natural gas, which has become cheaper and is cleaner burning than coal; and the installation of state-of-the-art pollution controls by many plants—in anticipation of new health protections issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).



Finalized in 2011, EPA's Mercury and Air Toxics standards will cut mercury air pollution by 79 percent from 2010 levels, beginning in 2015. **Connecticut** is one of only 13 states to have electric sector mercury regulations that are at least as stringent as the EPA's proposed utility air toxics rule, according to the report.

In the second edition of "Toxic Power: How Power Plants Contaminate Our Air and States," NRDC also found that coal- and oil-fired power plants still contribute nearly half (44



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percent) of all the toxic air pollution reported to the Environmental Protection Agency’s Toxics Release Inventory (TRI). The report also ranks the states by the amount of their toxic air pollution levels.

Among Connecticut’s neighboring states, New Hampshire at #21, New York at #24 and Massachusetts at #27 narrowly missed being included in the “toxic 20”. Rhode Island was #47, Maine was #49 and Vermont was #50.

Newly installed EPA Administrator **Gina McCarthy**, a former Connecticut Commissioner of Environmental Protection, has spent the past four years with responsibility over EPA’s air pollution regulations as the assistant administrator of the EPA’s Office of Air and Radiation.



With pollution reductions resulting from the upcoming standard, it is estimated that as many as 11,000 premature deaths and 130,000 asthma attacks, 5,700 hospital visits, 4,700 heart attacks, and 2,800 cases of chronic bronchitis will be avoided in 2016. The public health improvements are also estimated to save \$37

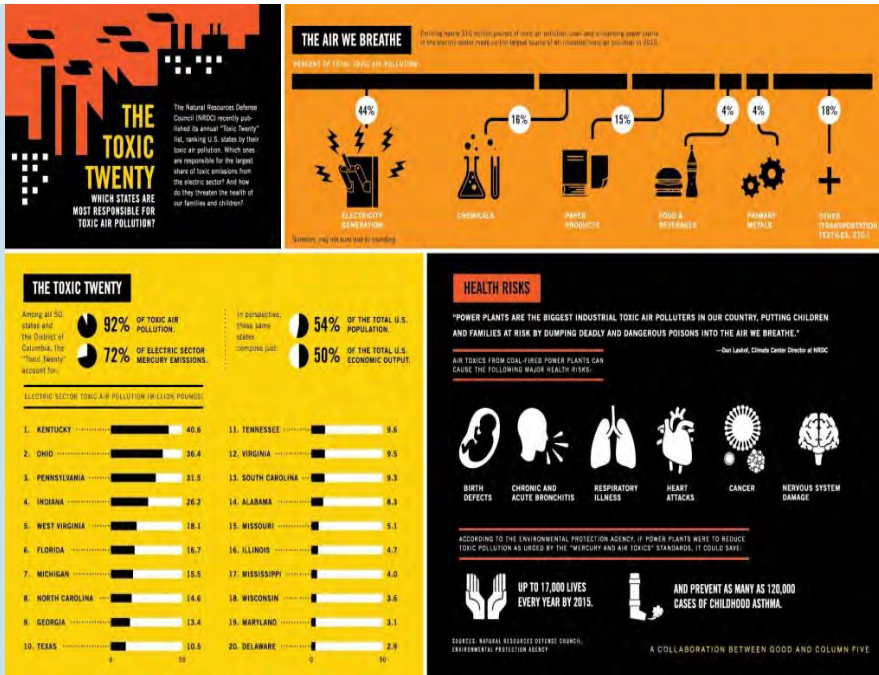
billion to \$90 billion in health costs, and prevent up to 540,000 missed work or “sick” days each year.

Franz Matzner, NRDC associate director of Government Affairs, said: “For too long, Americans have had no choice but to breathe toxic air pollution. Thanks to the EPA, the air is getting cleaner.” Despite the overall reductions in total emissions, 18 of the Toxic 20 from 2009 remain in the 2010 list, although several states have made significant improvements highlighted in the report. The states on the “**Toxic 20**” list (from worst to best) are:

1. Kentucky
2. Ohio
3. Pennsylvania
4. Indiana
5. West Virginia
6. Florida
7. Michigan
8. North Carolina
9. Georgia
10. Texas
11. Tennessee
12. Virginia
13. South Carolina
14. Alabama
15. Missouri
16. Illinois
17. Mississippi
18. Wisconsin
19. Maryland
20. Delaware

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Wheelabrator Incinerator to Close in September

By Patrick O’Grady
Valley New Correspondent

Thursday, August 1, 2013
(Published in print: Thursday, August 1, 2013)

Claremont — In an unexpected announcement yesterday, Wheelabrator Technologies said it will shut down its waste-to-energy incinerator on Grissom Lane this fall for financial reasons.

The facility, which has about two dozen employees, had been a lightning rod for controversy for decades, particularly in regards to pollution from emissions produced by burning mountains of garbage. The company said it always followed state and federal regulations for emissions.

“Wheelabrator’s 200 ton-per-day waste-to-energy facility in Claremont will be taken out of service September 30, 2013 after nearly 27 years of successful operation,” the company said in a statement. “Several factors led to this difficult business decision including economic conditions in both the waste and energy markets and a constrained transportation network in the remote region of New Hampshire near the Vermont border as well of a lack of economies of scale inherent in a small power plant operating at a fraction of the size of Wheelabrator’s 16 other waste-to-energy facilities.”

The announcement was welcomed by longtime opponents such as Bill Gallagher, of Cornish, and Katie Lajoie, of Charlestown.

“This is really big,” said Gallagher, whose opposition to the incinerator was so vehement that he once was arrested in early 1990s for refusing to leave a regional waste district meeting. “It is a reason to celebrate and a new beginning for Claremont. The biggest thing is the air pollution will go away. They took our throw-aways and turn them into pollution.”

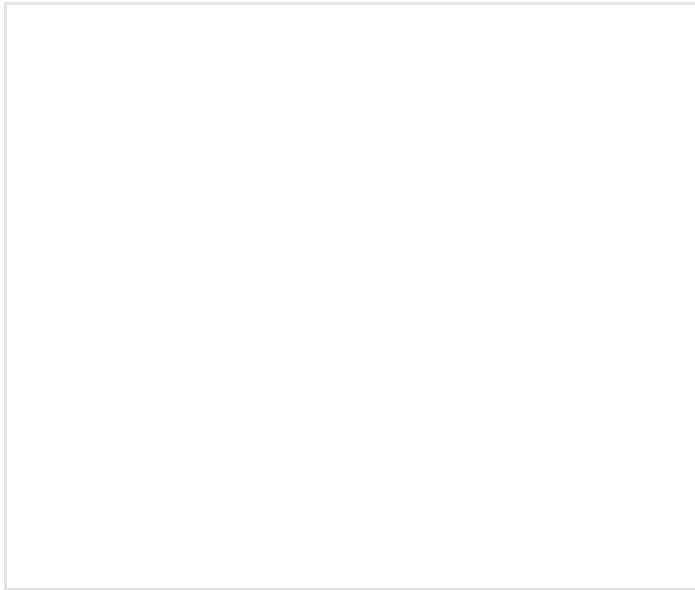
Lajoie, who along with 30 other residents has a appeal pending before the state Department of Environmental Service challenging a proposed five-year operating permit for the plant, said shuttering the facility will be good for the region.

“Wheelabrator’s announcement that it is closing the incinerator is certainly exciting news,” Lajoie said in an email. “The people of Claremont and the rest of Sullivan County have worked hard to make this happen, and they deserve credit for their persistent efforts to stop the pollution that comes with incineration. This news provides a welcome boost for efforts to make waste reduction and recycling top priorities in our area.”

Lajoie said she does not know what will happen to the appeal before DES. Another hearing is scheduled for August 14.

When asked last night whether the persistent opposition to the plant since it went online in the late 1980s played a role

A vertical stack of social sharing icons. From top to bottom: an envelope icon with the text 'Email', a printer icon with the text 'Print', a Facebook 'f' icon, a Twitter bird icon, another envelope icon, an RSS icon, and a comment bubble icon with a '0' below it.



Despite claims by opponents that dioxins and heavy metals were being released into the air at dangerous levels, Wheelabrator officials have always pointed to the company's environmental record and the facility's consistent compliance with state and federal environmental standards with respect to plant emissions.

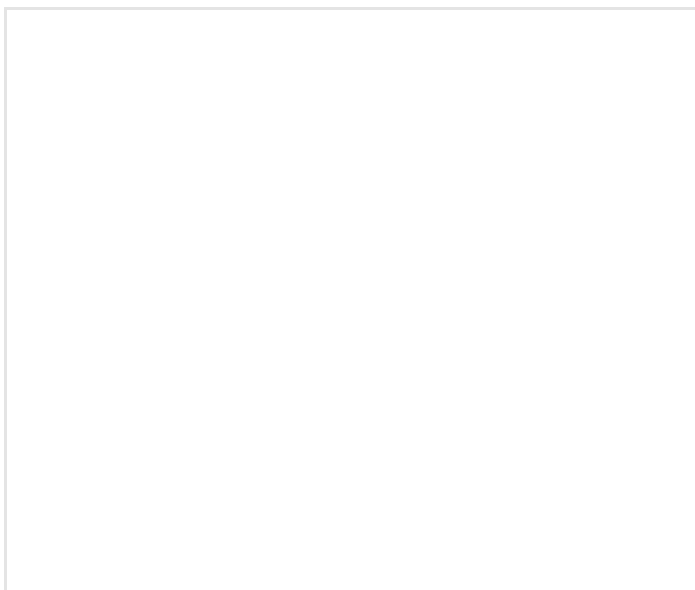
Construction of the plant, which used the burning of garbage to generate electricity that was sold to the power grid, was approved in a controversial decision by the Claremont City Council in the 1980s after the council members elected not to put the question on whether to build the incinerator to a voter referendum.

Claremont had joined with 28 other New Hampshire and Vermont towns, some as far away as Meredith, N.H., to form the New Hampshire-Vermont Solid Waste Project that had a 20-year contract to deliver all trash to the incinerator through 2007. The project's existence was marked by years of infighting, lawsuits and financial difficulties with the parent incinerator group, Working on Waste, often in the thick of it.

New Hampshire towns went their separate ways when the project dissolved but many of the Vermont towns formed their own district.

The company said in its statement yesterday it would work to assist the 25 affected employees "in finding new job opportunities, keeping them fully advised of available positions within the Wheelabrator and Waste Management system."

The company said that since beginning operation in 1987, the Claremont facility processed 1.7 million tons of solid waste, recycled more than 7,000 tons of ferrous metal and generated 800 million kilowatt hours of energy.



City Manager Guy Santagate said he received a call from LaRiviere late Tuesday informing him that the plant would stop accepting waste Sept. 16 and cease operations on Sept. 30.

Santagate said the company pays about \$275,000 a year in property taxes and about another \$240,000 for water.

"They will continue to pay the taxes but the water use goes away," he said. "It is not a small thing for the city, but the worst part is people losing their jobs. That is tough."

As for where the city will dispose of waste once the incinerator shuts down, Santagate said officials first need to determine the available options.

According to its website, Wheelabrator pioneered the "waste-to-energy industry in the U.S. when it designed, built and operated the first waste-to-energy plant in the U.S. in 1974."

currently operates 17 facilities with a combined processing capacity of more than 23,000 tons per day of municipal solid waste.

John Tuthill, of Acworth, who served as his town's representative to the solid waste project for several years and was a staunch opponent of the incinerator, said yesterday that while the shut down is good news, it does not give towns much time to transition.

"Still, it is an opportunity," Tuthill said. "I hope now the primary focus will be on recovery and recycle"

Patrick O'Grady can be reached at ogrady56@yahoo.com



Jackson County officials lose hope in keeping incinerator open, meeting with state seals fate of facility

Loading Photo Gallery

Lisa Satayut | Lsatayut@mlive.com By **Lisa Satayut** | Lsatayut@mlive.com

on August 12, 2013 at 2:15 PM

JACKSON, MI – Any **last-minute hope** Jackson County officials had for saving the county incinerator is long gone.

A recent meeting between county and state officials reaffirmed the state's stance on ending a long-term contract with the county. **It will shut down in October.** Jackson County Administrator Michael Overton met with Randy Treacher, the chief deputy director of the Michigan Department of Corrections, on Friday, Aug. 9.

"Nothing changed," Overton said.

Even after the state announced its decision **to stop purchasing steam and electricity from the facility**, Overton continued to press the MDOC for a face-to-face meeting in the hopes that state officials would reconsider ending the agreement.

The facility cannot operate without the \$2.4 million in annual revenue the MDOC pays for steam and electricity. The outcome of the meeting also means 33 people employed at the incinerator will lose their jobs in October.

It is unclear what was specifically discussed at the meeting. Overton said he was asked by state officials to not publicly discuss what took place at the meeting. MDOC Spokesman Russ Marlan was not immediately available for comment.

Marlan previously said the state can produce cheaper steam.

"We can produce our steam more efficiently, we've been buying it at \$1 per therm from the county, but we can produce it for 60 cents a therm. It's quite a bit cheaper to produce it on our own," Marlan said.

The corrections department already operates its own power plant to ensure energy is constantly supplied to local prisons because the **incinerator is not always reliable.**

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners previously voted 8-1 to end a contract with the company that manages the county incinerator, Veolia.

At the time the termination letter was sent to Veolia, **Overton still had hopes the state would continue to at least purchase electricity** and the notice could be reversed.

The bonds on the incinerator will be paid off in October.

The facility was originally built for the purpose of providing energy to the state prisons in Jackson.


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Supremes Side With State On Unclaimed Bottle Deposits

by Christine Stuart | Aug 13, 2013 3:47pm

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Posted to: [Courts, Legal](#)

The **Supreme Court sided**  with the state Tuesday when it found beer and soda distributors don't have a property right to the unclaimed nickels it collected back in 2009.

The lawsuit **stems** from a decision by the General Assembly in **2009** to take the unclaimed bottle deposits to help balance that year's budget.

But lawyers for 12 soda and beer distributors claimed that the retroactive taking of the deposits from Dec. 1, 2008 to April 1, 2009 was a violation of their property rights.

The Supreme Court disagreed. Justice Peter Zarella, who authored the opinion, concluded that "because the plaintiffs failed to prove that they had a clear entitlement to the unclaimed deposits attributable to the period from December 1, 2008, to April 1, 2009, the trial court improperly determined that the 2009 act resulted in an unconstitutional taking."

Zarella continued: "Although the plaintiffs may have demonstrated that the special accounts in which the funds were deposited were opened in their names, that fact, without more, does not establish that they had a property interest in the unclaimed deposits."

The judgment was reversed and sent back to the trial court.

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CT denies eight companies' \$1B secret request

BY **BRAD KANE**

8/13/2013



HBJ FILE PHOTO

The solar plan for the Hartford landfill, also the site of natural gas collection, was the only ZREC project as of July to be publicly disclosed by its owner.

Connecticut regulators have denied the requests from eight companies to keep secret their information in a 21-year, \$1 billion state renewable energy credit program, but pushed back the release of that information until next week.

The Public Utilities Regulatory Authority in July reversed its position on the Zero-emissions/Low-emissions Renewable Energy Credit program, or ZREC/LREC, saying information about the bids from participating companies should be release to the public, including the name of the company, the location of their planned renewable energy project, and how much they were asked for in ZRECs or LRECs. PURA's reversal came after Hartford Business Journal filed a Freedom of Information Act request for the information that regulators previously ruled was secret.

Eight companies filed for protective orders, trying to keep their information secret. They argued the information was proprietary and therefore not subject to public disclosure laws. The eight companies were Venti Wind of Austin, Texas; The Hartford Steam Co.; Solar City of San Mateo, Calif.; Soltage of Jersey City, N.J.; SunEdison of Beltsville, Md.; Solar Star Connecticut of San Jose, Calif.; SunPower Corp. of San Jose, Calif.; and GP Renewables & Trading of New York City.

Because of the time it took PURA to rule on the protective orders, the release of the information was pushed back to Aug. 23. Previously, the release was scheduled for Wednesday.

Read **HBJ's story from the Aug. 12 print edition** about these protective order requests.

syracuse.com

Cortland County, OCRRA might swap trash for ash

2009-11-17-mjg-OCRRA3.JPG

The Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency's trash incinerator on Rock Cut Road in Jamesville. County officials are discussing lifting a long-standing ban on importing trash and taking in Cortland County's garbage. (*Mike Greenlar | mgreenlar@syracuse.com*)

Glenn Coin | gcoin@syracuse.com By **Glenn Coin | gcoin@syracuse.com**

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on August 14, 2013 at 2:38 PM, updated August 14, 2013 at 4:28 PM

Syracuse, N.Y. -- Onondaga and Cortland counties hope to cut a deal this year to burn Cortland garbage in Jamesville in exchange for dumping incinerator ash in Cortland County's landfill.

Officials from both counties and the Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency said today a deal will boost Cortland County's money-losing landfill and also generate \$500,000 more in electricity sales at the OCRRA incinerator in Jamesville.

The deal would also strengthen OCRRA's hand in **its negotiations with Covanta Energy**, which runs the incinerator and has the option of buying it in 2015. Covanta would have to take on \$40 million in bond debt that would have to be repaid through incinerator revenues.

"We're going to start negotiating with Cortland County in a way that is going to satisfy a lot of competing interests," Onondaga County Executive Joanie Mahoney said at a news conference.

The agreement would require approval of both county legislatures. Onondaga County in 1992 banned trash from other counties, but could make an exception for Cortland County, officials said. Legislature Chairman Ryan McMahon said there would be public hearings before any vote.

Details of the arrangement are still being negotiated, but officials today outlined a general idea of how it would work:

-- OCRRA would truck all the ash from the Rock Cut Road incinerator -- about 86,000 tons a year -- to Cortland County's landfill.

-- Trucks that brought that ash would then haul to the incinerator 23,000 tons of Cortland County's trash.

-- OCRRA would pay Cortland county about \$1 million a year to take the ash, which would more than make up the \$400,000 annual loss at the Cortland landfill.

-- OCRRA would save money by shipping the ash 40 miles to Cortland County instead of 80 miles to High Acres landfill near Rochester, where the ash goes now.

Increasing recycling rates and a drop in trash due to the economic recession have caused the incinerator to run at less than its capacity, officials said. The incinerator burns about 320,000 tons of trash a year, said OCRRA Executive Director Mark Donnelly, but could burn 361,000 tons.

Falling electricity rates have also cut into the plant's revenues: OCRRA took in \$7.4 million in 2011 from electrical sales, but just \$6.1 million last year. OCRRA **has budgeted \$6.5 million** for this year.

The incinerator **lost nearly \$6 million** from 2009 to 2011, the most recent data on the agency's web site.

A deal with Cortland County would put OCRRA in a better position when negotiating with Covanta, Mahoney said.

"It solves a problem for OCRRA and therefore for Onondaga County in how do you fill that capacity when entering negotiations," she said. "We want to enter negotiations with a maximized facility."

The Onondaga County Legislature in 1992 adopted a law banning trash from outside the county. Mahoney said people were fearful then about imported trash, but they shouldn't fear garbage coming from next-door Cortland County.

"Onondaga County and Cortland County trash are the same thing," Mahoney said. "It's not wise to let fear stand in the way of maximizing a world-class facility."

Here is the agreement in principle between the two counties:

Onondaga-Cortland county trash agreement

Building inspector: Covanta probably not to blame for Falls rat problem Covanta to help efforts to end infestation

BY: [Thomas Prohaska \(mailto:tprohaska@buffnews.com\)](mailto:tprohaska@buffnews.com) Published: August 16, 2013, 08:40 PM
Updated: August 17, 2013, 01:09 AM

NIAGARA FALLS – The city’s chief building inspector said Friday he doesn’t think Covanta Niagara’s energy-from-waste incinerator has caused a recent rat infestation in a nearby neighborhood.

Dennis F. Virtuoso, who also is a Niagara County legislator, said he thinks the source of the problem is the reconstruction of nearby Buffalo Avenue.

However, Covanta business manager Kevin O’Neil said the company will help with efforts to end the rat problem, even though Covanta disclaims responsibility for it.

“These are our neighbors,” said O’Neil, whose company is seeking approval for a major expansion to allow for New York City garbage to be shipped in for burning at the incinerator.

Virtuoso said, “When they tore up Buffalo Avenue, they also tore up the sewers, and the rats were living in the sewers. We didn’t have a problem until they started working on the street.”

The infestation area is bounded roughly by Buffalo and Stephenson avenues and 56th and 60th streets, Virtuoso said. Dead rats have been found in alleys there.

O’Neil said rat reports started coming in as soon as the work started on Buffalo Avenue in March.

“Here in our facility, we don’t have a rat problem, and we have 5,000 to 6,000 tons of garbage on hand most of the time,” O’Neil said.

He said Covanta, formerly known as American Ref-Fuel, has been burning trash in the neighborhood for 33 years.

Residents complained that they’ve seen rats jumping off garbage trucks arriving at Covanta. O’Neil said those trucks aren’t Covanta’s; they belong to the municipalities that haul garbage there.

But O’Neil said it’s not unheard of for those trucks to contain rats, raccoons, skunks or other small animals that happen to be in garbage cans or bags when they are collected.

“Every once in a while, a rat jumps out of a truck. They become fuel here,” O’Neil said.

Vituoso said there’s no need for rats to scavenge for food in the neighborhood if they find themselves in Covanta’s trash pile.

“It’s like a smorgasbord for the rats. Why would they ever leave?” he asked.

Virtuoso said he thinks one of the other reasons for the rat problem is a field between Frontier and Stephenson avenues, owned by the state Department of Transportation, which hasn’t been mowed this year. The inspector thinks rats migrating from the sewers are nesting there.

“That’s possible. We do have folks who are talking with the city and the [county] Department of Health,” DOT spokeswoman Jennifer Post said. “We were looking at having [the field] revert to its natural state, but if it’s determined that mowing is needed to address a rodent problem, we would look at it.”

County Environmental Health Director James J. Devald said the blame game can come later.

“That’s been set aside. The main thing is to address the problem,” Devald said. He said the Health Department has been distributing information to homeowners about discouraging rats by covering up garbage cans, cleaning up animal waste and making bird feeders inaccessible.

Devald said Covanta has a licensed exterminator who seldom works off plant property, but he’s been spreading some rat poison, and there’s been talk of having Covanta pay for a baiting program.

O’Neil, the Covanta executive, said most of the homes in the neighborhood are well-kept, but not all.

“I can send over an exterminator to two houses, but that doesn’t help if the other 42 houses don’t take care of their issues,” O’Neil said.

email: tprohaska@buffnews.com

Thomas Prohaska

Political corruption has long been a thorn in Connecticut's side, from shady backroom deals to outright abuses of power. So can our problems be solved, or are we destined to have a . . .

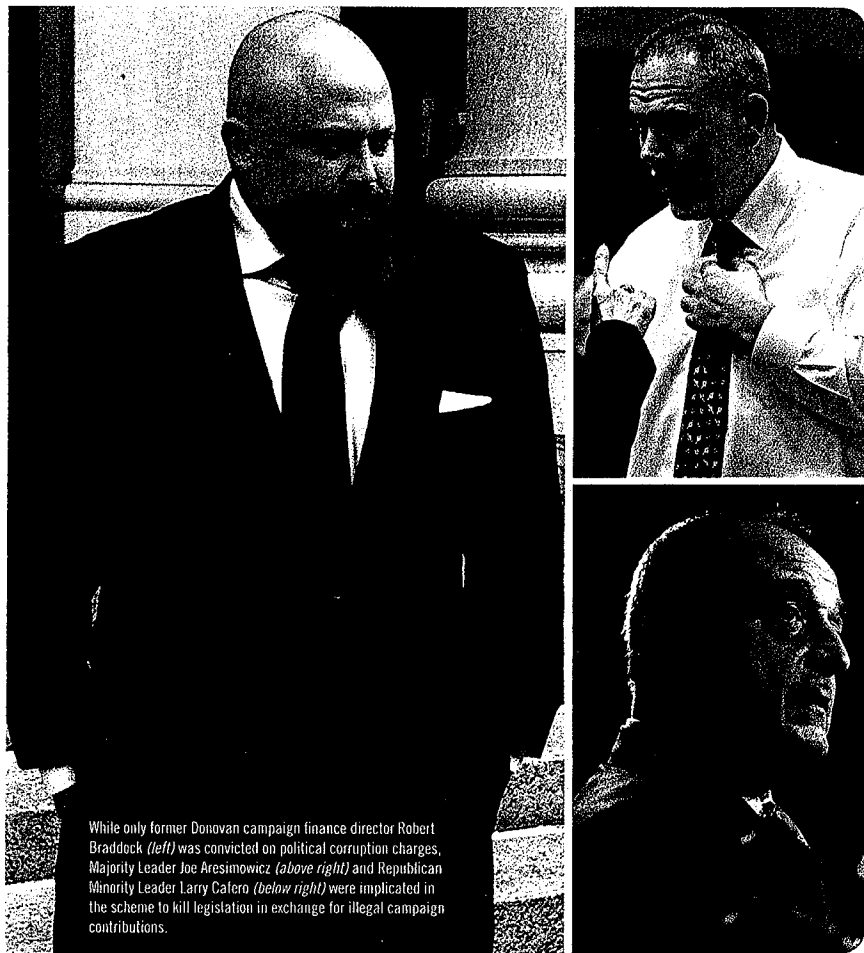


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BY JENNIFER SWIFT



While only former Donovan campaign finance director Robert Braddock (left) was convicted on political corruption charges, Majority Leader Joe Aresimowicz (above right) and Republican Minority Leader Larry Cafero (below right) were implicated in the scheme to kill legislation in exchange for illegal campaign contributions.

Much more was on trial in New Haven's federal courthouse in May than Robert Braddock.

The 34-year-old political campaign journeyman from North Carolina came to Connecticut to work as finance director for former Speaker of the House Chris Donovan's failed 2012 bid for U.S. Congress in the 5th District. He was caught in an FBI sting in which Donovan staffers agreed to swap the killing of legislation in the General Assembly for illegal campaign contributions, and ultimately was charged and convicted.

This raised red flags regarding Chris Donovan himself, but the trial raised questions about the conduct of two other House leaders—now-Majority Leader Joe Aresimowicz and Republican Minority Leader Larry

Cafero—and exposed a culture in Hartford where ethical safeguards are routinely side-stepped and a system that is ill-equipped to guard against corruption. The FBI presented text messages from Aresimowicz, or “Joe A-to-Z” as he’s known at the Capitol, promising longtime union activist Ray Soucy that he’d “fix” the legislation as soon as he got the okay from Donovan. The Braddock trial featured a tape of Soucy trying to stuff cash into Cafero’s legislative office refrigerator and being told instead that Cafero would have a staff member “clock out and walk down the street” so they could do it legally.

Donovan tried to paint Braddock as a rogue interloper who in no way reflected how his campaign, the speaker’s office or the Connecticut House of Representatives was run. But then Donovan’s campaign manager and longtime legislative right-hand man, Joshua

Nassi, was charged. Nassi, who had stepped away from his job in the speaker’s office to run Donovan’s congressional campaign, was accused of promising to kill legislation that would have taxed the “roll your own” tobacco industry in exchange for thousands of dollars in campaign contributions he knew were being made illegally in the names of “straw” donors to skirt contribution limits and public notice requirements. The FBI had evidence that Nassi was communicating with Laura Jordan, who remained on Donovan’s legislative staff, about killing the legislation.

It got worse for Donovan during Braddock’s trial. A video was played of Donovan telling the “roll your own” industry go-between Soucy, “I took care of you, didn’t I?”

And it got worse for Connecticut’s political establishment writ large. In a state that has prided itself on the public financing and other campaign reforms enacted in the wake of the corruption scandal that sent former Gov. John Rowland to prison 10 years ago, it was another reminder that perhaps we aren’t so far removed, or protected, from the “Corrupticut” days.

While the Braddock trial was playing out, Democrats in the General Assembly were rolling back some of those very Rowland-era campaign finance reforms to gird themselves against an expected gubernatorial and legislative campaign onslaught from shadowy and mostly unregulated “Super PACs” in 2014. It all raises a troubling question: Is the Capitol for sale?

The Braddock case showed there are buyers and sellers, as well as those willing to avert their eyes during the transaction. “The evidence disclosed during this trial revealed a disturbing scheme operated by individuals who believed that our federal campaign finance laws are meaningless, and that the legislative process can be easily corrupted with campaign contributions,” acting U.S. Attorney Deirdre M. Daly said after Braddock was found guilty.

So why has there been virtually no momentum among lawmakers to enact the kinds of reforms proposed after the Rowland scandal? Whether sincere or suffering a severe case of denial, leaders still argue that the process *can’t* “be easily corrupted,” in the words of Daly. The man who took over for Donovan, Speaker of the House Brendan Sharkey, actually asserts that the system worked because Soucy failed in his attempt to buy legislative action.

What about the rest of the time—all of those theoretical occasions when the FBI is not secretly recording lawmakers’ conversations? Well, Sharkey and his colleagues say that Connecticut voters should trust that most legislators have good motives. Cafero says he doesn’t believe huge reforms are needed in the legislature. “They are a pretty honest people,” he says. His comments are echoed by Aresimowicz, who says the Braddock case “should not be what the [legisla-

BRADDOCK: AP PHOTO/DAVID COLLINS; ARESIMOWICZ: AP PHOTO/JESSICA HILL; CAFERO: AP PHOTO/JESSICA HILL

ture] is judged by ... this is the exception.”

When the Donovan scandal first broke, Linda Schofield, a retiring Democratic state representative from Simsbury who was backing one of Donovan's opponents in the 5th District Congress race, described an environment in the House in which the speaker and staff members had near-absolute control over which pieces of legislation would get votes or not, regardless of how much support they had among rank-and-file members. This opened the door to the kind of manipulation that Donovan's office was accused of in the Braddock trial. Schofield said it effectively prevented legislators from ever criticizing or challenging the speaker. If they did, she said, no piece of legislation or funding project for their district would ever see the light of day again.

This year's legislative session, with Sharkey holding the gavel in the House, was marked by major pieces of legislation—the introduction of keno gambling in the state, for example, and exempting murder scene photos from the state's Freedom of Information Act—that were crafted in secret and called for a vote without the customary public hearing and legislative committee-review process. After the session, the *Hartford Courant* also detailed a series of budget “rats” that were slipped into bigger pieces of legislation at the last moment, delivering thousands in pork barrel projects to the home districts of legislators across the state.

Sharkey hems and haws when asked if the power of the speaker and other top legislative leaders should be scaled back. To say yes gives a nod to the perspective that there is widespread corruption and bad intent among legislators in Hartford, but to say no is to suggest that there's absolutely nothing wrong with the system, he says.

“Keep in mind that the person who made that assumption is a scumbag,” Sharkey says, pointedly referring to union activist-turned-FBI-informant Soucy, though never mentioning him by name. “And everybody knows him as a scumbag, and as came out in the trial, he believed that he could influence legislators and he believed that he could influence legislation in Hartford, but no one [was bought]. ... If we're going to adjust our government's system around those kinds of behaviors, I think we're in deeper trouble than I think even the public acknowledges. I don't think that we should necessarily be modifying the roles of our leaders based on the perception of one particularly notorious individual with a warped perception of his own importance.”

Sharkey says it's hard for the public to distinguish between what Soucy said could be done and the reality. Just because Soucy touted that he had influence and could buy politicians doesn't mean that's necessarily the case, he says.

Critics who have a problem with the lack of response to the Donovan scandal are further incensed by the General Assembly's

move to weaken campaign finance laws. On a straight party-line vote—Democrats in favor, Republicans opposed—legislators increased the amount of money that can be donated to state and local political party committees from \$5,000 to \$10,000 and \$1,000 to \$2,000, respectively. They also removed restrictions on state political parties, allowing them to spend unlimited money on behalf of individual candidates operating under the state's publicly financed “clean elections” program and allowing that money to be spent on attack ads against their opponents.

This is necessary, Democrats argued, because of the “Super PAC” system they are working against in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision. It allowed outside groups facing little regulation to accept unlimited donations and spend unlimited amounts of money on behalf of or against candidates. It is thought that at least two Democratic candidates in the last election cycle—one in the general election in 2012 and one in a special election primary—lost after an influx of last-minute Super PAC spending against them. Gov. Dannel Malloy said that the changes to Connecticut's Rowland-era campaign finance reforms will help equip publicly financed candidates to fight back against Super PACs in 2014.

This rollback of legislation has more to do with politicians worried about their own seats than the actual *Citizens United* case, according to Gary Rose, a professor and chairman of the Department of Government and Politics at Sacred Heart University. “Anytime there's reform, or so-called reform, if you want to call it that, at the bottom line it's really more political and partisan than some grandiose legal matter, and I think that's really what's at work here. It really is amusing,” Rose says. “I think there's more self-interest involved in what we're seeing in terms of these loopholes now being allowed by the Democrats.”

“Let me be very clear about why I'm signing this bill into law,” Malloy said in a June statement defending the changes. “The Supreme Court's decision in the *Citizens United* case was a tragic decision. The *Citizens United* decision reversed years of campaign finance reforms and allowed unlimited private money into politics, empowering the wealthy few at the expense of our democracy. Faced with that tragic decision, which is now the law of the land, we can at least shine a light on the sources of private money in politics. The bill I'm signing today requires a level of disclosure that few if any other states require. No bill is perfect. But this bill makes Connecticut a national leader in requiring disclosure and transparency.”

But how sacred or effective were Connecticut's campaign finance laws to begin with? The system is a maze. What's illegal in one spot can be legal just 10 feet away. But unlike most mazes, the rules for campaign finance have convenient sidesteps at every turn.

You've hit a dead end for donating to your candidate? No worries. Politicians have ways of setting you down a different path. For every rule that has yet to be repealed, there's a loophole waiting to be exploited. Before there were Super PACs, there was bundling.

It extends beyond the campaign cycle. The trash-to-energy plant operator, Connecticut Resources Recovery Association, isn't allowed to have paid lobbyists working the halls of the Capitol, so Tom Ritter (another former Speaker of the House) “volunteers” as a lobbyist for the agency. At the same time, he's paid \$7,000 a month by CRRA for “other work,” while his law firm, Brown Rudnick, where Cafero works his day job as a partner, took in \$2.8 million from CRRA from 2007 to 2012.

And campaigns are rarely ever wholly separate from elected office. There's an incestuous nature of campaign staffers rotating from campaign to elected office staff and back again. Most in Hartford haven't gotten there without working on a campaign, and campaigning for incumbents helps them keep their own jobs. A legislative staffer can wear the hat of taxpayer-employed legislative aide in the office, then clock out and take a few steps away from the Capitol to put his or her campaign aide hat on, ready and willing to take your contribution.

A lawmaker can say he or she doesn't take bribes because those are illegal—but will meet with an interested party in their office, have an aide do the hat-switch down the road and take a donation moments later from that same person. Unless they specifically say otherwise, it's not a bribe. And while legislators aren't permitted to take contributions for state campaigns over \$100 from lobbyists, or when the General Assembly is in session, if that legislator's seeking *federal* office, those rules go away. This is why lobbyists with interests in the State Capitol—from the “roll your own” tobacco industry to business groups lobbying for the legalization of mixed martial arts events to those against a ban on teenagers' use of indoor tanning beds—were allowed to give money to Donovan's campaign for U.S. Congress.

If discussion of corruption and reform has been muted in the wake of the Braddock trial, Democrats could face a minefield on the issue as the 2014 election approaches. Former Ambassador to Ireland Tom Foley, who lost narrowly to Malloy in 2012 and is the front-runner for the Republican nomination to face him in a rematch, proposed sweeping ethics reforms earlier this year that were rejected out of hand by legislators. He will likely pick back up on the issue of corruption and criticize Malloy's inaction as *de facto* leader of the Connecticut Democratic Party. It's a good bet that Malloy will use the loosened campaign finance rules he pushed for to pay for ads answering those criticisms. ■



RIVEREAST NEWS BULLETIN 7/12/2013

“Not-So Balanced” Budget

To the Editor:

I have been asked how the majority party can claim Connecticut will have a balanced budget over the next two years without any new taxes. Regrettably, it is not balanced by any set of definitions we would use with our own finances.

First, there were tax increases in the budget, specifically the hike in the gas tax. In addition, there are taxes which were set to expire this year but instead were extended. A broken promise to Connecticut citizens.

Second, the budget raided, or “swept” over \$130 million of dedicated funds. Taxpayers paid into these funds with the expectation the money being collected would actually be used for those specified purposes. Another broken promise to Connecticut citizens.

The most egregious fund sweep is the \$100 million taken from the Special Transportation Fund (STF) and put into the General Budget fund. The STF is supposed to be used to repair our roads and bridges. Money is normally collected from the state’s gas tax and the gross receipts tax on petroleum and put into the STF. Instead, the fund was raided, leaving Connecticut with \$93 million below the level necessary just to maintain current services. All of us can attest that our roads can’t afford to lose these funds.

The Probate Court Fund, the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund, Stem Cell Research Fund, the Clean Energy Finance and Investment Authority, the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority – all fell victim to these raids. Important funds were withdrawn from their intended purpose, and instead were used to plug the budget deficit.

Taxpayers should not be tricked into thinking their money is going one place when in fact it is going somewhere else, especially if it means the government cannot maintain the fundamentals – such as roads and bridges.

**State Rep. Christie Carpino
R-32nd District
Portland and Cromwell**

Editorial

Time to reform state General Assembly's rule book

The cover story in the August issue of Connecticut Magazine lays out in depressing detail the complete sham that is our state's campaign finance laws and ethics rules for elected officials.

Placing an envelope full of cash in the House Minority Leader Larry Cafero's State-house office refrigerator, as a "roll your own tobacco" industry supporter attempted to do last year, is against the law. But writing a check instead, and walking a short distance down the street with a "clocked out" staffer of the minority leader is OK.

Run up against the limit of what you're allowed to donate to a single candidate? Just funnel that money to a "Super PAC" that's supporting them or attacking their opponent.

Looking for a way to "help/influence" a candidate, but they're running as part of the state's publicly financed "clean election" system, and don't feel like \$100 buys enough of their favor towards you? Take advantage of the new law pushed through by Gov. Dannel Malloy and Democrats in the General Assembly. It allows you to give thousands to state party committees, which are now allowed to spend unlimited amounts of money supporting your "clean" candidate or barraging their opponent with attack ads.

Barred or restricted from paying for lobbying the General Assembly like the Connecticut Resources Recovery Association is supposed to be? Learn from what they did in having former Speaker of the House Tom Ritter "volunteer" as a lobbyist for them while earning insane amounts of money as a "consultant" in other areas. Or funnel money by being a generous client of the law firm where both Ritter and Cafero are partners.

One basic takeaway from Connecticut Magazine's reporting is that, for the foreseeable future, at least, you can't get at Connecticut's corruption problem through campaign finance rules.

If our state wants to limit the ability to manipulate the legislative process, instead it should reform the way the legislative process works.

Right now, the speaker of the House, the president of the

Senate and a handful of other powerful legislative leaders have near-absolute control over whether something makes it into law or the state budget or not. That's how former Speaker of the House Chris Donovan became embroiled in a corruption scandal. The "roll your own" tobacco industry exchanged campaign cash for his 5th District congressional bid in exchange for a promise to kill legislation that would have increased their taxes. Donovan's staff knew that the speaker's office could kill legislation with ease. For example, Donovan killed a bipartisan jobs bill that had near-unanimous support among legislators last year because he was mad that the Senate wasn't going to take up a minimum wage increase he favored.

Similarly, this year under Senate President Don Williams and new Speaker Brendan Sharkey, bills that had wide support were not called for votes in the waning hours of the session, while significant legislation (the Newtown secrecy bill and Keno, for examples) and pet funding projects (or "budget rats," as the Hartford Courant called them) were slipped into law without a hearing or any kind of notice to the public.

But it's reforms to this kind of business-as-usual that get the most resistance from Connecticut's political leaders - simple ideas such as requiring that every piece of legislation go through a set process of committee review, public hearing, and proper public notice and transparency, or require a supermajority vote for those rules to be suspended.

You see, if the General Assembly worked like that, the speaker and senate president wouldn't have power to make legislators fall in line at their whim (with the threat of nothing coming from them or their district ever seeing the light of day if they don't), and they wouldn't as easily be able to funnel money and change rules on behalf of the people who are funding their grip on power.

courant.com/news/opinion/hc-op-rennie-politics-never-goes-on-vacation-20130809,0,3520337.column

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COLUMN

Political Intrigue While State Vacations

Kevin Rennie

NOW YOU KNOW

7:26 PM EDT, August 9, 2013

It's the beginning of August and while you enjoy the height of summer pleasure, government and politics roll along, providing an opportunity to review some old items and touch on some new ones.

••**The Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority** (CRRA) continues to battle to keep some communications between it and its "municipal liaison" Thomas Ritter, a lawyer at the law firm Brown Rudnick, which also represents CRRA. The Freedom of Information Commission heard more testimony Friday. The costly matter has dragged on for months. CRRA is seeking to thwart Matthew Hennessy in his pursuit of a claim over the awarding of the municipal services contract to Ritter.

CRRA claims Ritter sometimes was its lawyer and at other times was not. The issue ensnared House Republican leader Lawrence Cafero earlier this year. He's a "contract partner" at Brown Rudnick and as a legislative leader appoints two members of the CRRA board. Cafero insisted earlier this year that his appointees did not vote on the lucrative contracts that his firm receives from CRRA. Cafero appointee Granby First Selectman John Adams must not have read Cafero's claims. In May, Adams voted to pay Brown Rudnick another \$85,000 this year.

•**State government's creation of a health insurance exchange** hit a bump last week when Aetna, the giant health insurance company headquartered in Hartford, decided not to participate in the program's October launch. Aetna believed it needed higher rates than state regulators would allow to make money on it.

Another major health care company, Bloomfield-based CIGNA, is not in the state exchange. In its website's corporate responsibility section, the international powerhouse says it supports the program. CIGNA receives tens of millions in state aid under Gov. Dannel P. Malloy's 2011 corporate welfare program. Over a decade, CIGNA could reap as much as \$71 million in taxpayer benefits. You might think that such a bounty from the state's working men and women to a corporation that makes billions would prompt CIGNA to participate in the state's ballyhooed medical insurance exchange. You would be wrong.

The cost of medical care looms over many cogs of state government. The budget for this fiscal year and the one that follows includes savings of more than \$167 million in detecting and proving fraud in the Medicaid program of health care for the poor in the next two years. That seems wildly optimistic. The state does have some new tools for pursuing misuse of Medicaid, but those investigations take a long time to get from suspicion to resolution.

The projected Medicaid fraud figure looks more like an attempt to make the budget appear balanced than to include realistic numbers. It's in the fantasy portion of the document.

•**Much of the responsibility for clawing back** undeserved Medicaid funds will fall on state Attorney General George Jepsen. He's busy. On July 31, Jepsen joined the University of Connecticut's women's basketball team at the White House to mark its championship victory earlier this year.

Jepsen's office is looking for a law firm to oversee an investigation into how UConn officials handled allegations of sexual misconduct by a faculty member. Who gets the job may make the difference in how the critical inquiry goes. A powerful storm is gathering force and approaching the university.

Also at the White House with the team were the head of the UConn trustees, insider Larry McHugh; UConn President Susan Herbst; and her chief of staff, Rachel Rubin. No one in state government knows how to work the obscure levers of influence better than Rubin.

Where were other statewide officials? Comptroller Kevin Lembo, Treasurer Denise Nappier and Secretary of the State Denise Merrill must have been otherwise engaged. Jepsen's office says the White House invited him, and he had some meetings while he was there. It also says he exchanged only pleasantries with UConn officials at "the crowded event." Nevertheless, "it is always appropriate for the attorney general to meet with and talk to university officers," Jepsen's office wrote last week.

I disagree. Jepsen is an important figure in maintaining public confidence in this investigation. He needs to separate himself from UConn officials until this matter is resolved. If we are going to have a whitewash, it should not run through the White House.

Kevin Rennie is a lawyer and a former Republican state legislator. He can be reached at kfrennie@yahoo.com.

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Niagara Gazette

August 4, 2013

EDITORIAL: Situation surrounding Covanta's air permit application is troubling

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Niagara Gazette

Niagara Gazette — It's hard to imagine that in the wake of the recent Tonawanda Coke saga any regulatory agency would allow a company to install equipment without having an approved air permit in place.

And yet, this week, thanks to the hard work of some county residents, the Niagara Falls community has learned that Covanta Niagara, LLC, which operates a waste-to-energy facility off 56th Street, proceeded with the installation of a smokestack and natural gas boiler prior to having its air permit approved by the state's lead environmental watchdog — the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

As we learned with Tonawanda Coke, where the company and one of its top officials have been convicted of skirting environmental rules and contributing to the pollution of the air in the surrounding community, there's no room for failure when it comes to oversight of firms involved in businesses that can have an impact on the very air we breathe.

Covanta claims that it moved ahead with part of its ongoing expansion project because it was "critical" to its ability to provide steam for neighboring companies, including the new Greenpac liner board mill off 47th Street. It also claims the project moved forward with the "knowledge and concurrence" of the regulatory agency.

Falls residents now know the DEC knew construction had commenced in May, even though Covanta is still in the process of obtaining approval for a Title V permit renewal. This week, after prodding from Lewiston resident Amy Hope Witryol and Falls residents Chris Kudela and Shirley Hamilton, the agency announced it had issued a notice of violation and is considering enforcement actions, including possibly fines and injunctive relief, against Covanta.

Covanta officials say they had no intention of firing up the equipment before obtaining the proper permit to do so.

While that may be true, it is disconcerting that the firm felt it could push forward with a non-permitted project for economic reasons.

And then there's the DEC's position here. The agency's own documentation suggests it knew about Covanta's intentions to move forward with installation back in May. If so, why didn't DEC regulators step in at that time?

It appears as though DEC officials, hired to protect the community's interest, acted only after the situation

at Covanta was brought to the public's attention by three concerned residents.

If so, that is troubling.

Witryol, who has in the past dedicated vast amounts of time and energy to monitoring activities at the CWM hazardous waste landfill, has been asking pointed questions about the project for weeks now. Other residents, including Kudela and Hamilton, are now joining her efforts.

Her concerns, including those addressed to the Niagara County IDA, which granted an incentive package worth \$8 million as part of the expansion effort, have largely been ignored by local appointed and elected officials.

It's not too late for them, and others, to get more involved.

The DEC is accepting comments from the public about Covanta's air permit application through Monday. The Niagara Falls Planning Board has set a hearing for Aug. 14 to allow for more input from the public. Participation in the process is key to protecting the community's best interest.

One thing has become abundantly clear: Covanta's expansion project is far too important to ignore.