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Solid Waste Working Group Holds First Meeting

By THOMAS CALDWELL, InDepthNH.org 15 hours ago

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Screen shot from Jon Swan's video of the Solid Waste Working Group's first session.

By Thomas P. Caldwell, InDepthNH.org

CONCORD — The organizational meeting of the Solid Waste Working Group outlined the challenges ahead for the group whose five-year mission is to assist the state Department of Environmental Services in long-range planning and to make recommendations for changes in the existing solid waste reduction, recycling, and management policies.

Mike Wimsatt, director of the Waste Management Division, explained that the group, established through House Bill 413, is a self-directed, autonomous collection of volunteers and that his division's role is merely to provide information to make their task easier. Mike Nork, administrator of the newly created Materials Management Education and Planning Division within DES, will provide additional resources, including new rules and information on legislative initiatives that are taking place.

The group elected Rep. Karen Ebel, D-New London, as its chair. She had served on an earlier panel that helped to develop HB 413, so she brings to the table background experience on the goal-setting as well as an understanding of the underlying issues. She had become involved after seeing the disruption in the recycling industry after China announced it would close its market for United States recyclable materials two years ago.

Reagan Bissonnette of the nonprofit Northeast Resource Recovery Association said in nominating Ebel as chair that it was important to select someone without an economic interest in waste management, as many members of the group have. She said it also was important to select a chair who will be around for the duration of the discussions, saying that those working for a company or nonprofit might be replaced at any time. Ebel, even if she does not get re-elected to the legislature, can remain involved, Bissonnette said.

The legislation creating the working group specified that there be representation from the House, the Senate, the Waste Management Council, owners of in-state landfills, in-state solid waste haulers, companies that reprocess waste into products, the NRRA, cities with single-stream recycling, rural communities doing source separation, the healthcare industry, the Northeast Recycling Council, the Department of Business and Economic Affairs, and the DES, as well as someone with expertise in sustainability.

Ebel recommended that the group plan to meet every two months, with the possibility of having subcommittees working on specific issues between general meetings. They tentatively plan to meet in early-to mid-December, after the Solid Waste Bureau has finished drafting its biennial solid waste report on waste disposal reduction.

By way of having everyone get to know each other, Ebel had the members introduce themselves and their particular issues. Planning, disposal capacity, recycling options, and the infrastructure to handle any recommendations coming forward were some of the matters of concern.

Ebel noted that public interest in solid waste disposal has increased with Casella Waste System's proposal for a controversial new landfill near Forest Lake State Park in Dalton.

John Swan, who represents Save Forest Lake, was videotaping the meeting and commented afterward

that, while he was happy with Ebel's selection as chair, he was disturbed by her comments about the legal issues surrounding out-of-state solid waste.

Ebel noted that the courts have declared that, under the Interstate Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution, a state cannot refuse to accept solid waste from another state, creating a capacity problem for New Hampshire's landfills.

"As we all know," Swan commented later, "our state is plagued with an extraordinary amount of waste that is hauled into our borders, to the tune of approximately 50% of what is landfilled, thus taking up precious, existing space. I would hope that the SWWG would examine the efforts of both Maine and Vermont relative to their curbing of out-of-state waste, as we need to address that very problematic issue, not dismiss it at the very first meeting."

He was happier with Ebel's other comment, that local land use regulations must be observed.

"Despite the fact that the citizens of my town, Dalton, have voted to enact zoning twice in the last 2 1/2 years, in an effort to stop the Casella landfill project next to Forest Lake State Park, and despite the town select board sending several letters to NHDES to inform them of the fact that Casella refuses to acknowledge local control and submit an application locally for its project, the permitting process at NHDES for this obviously unwanted landfill continues," Swan said.

Others are advocating for a radical departure from the current focus on simply reducing the amount of solid waste. Karen Lajoie of Charlestown and John Tuthill of Acworth say that the target should be zero waste.

In an electronic letter to members of the committee on Oct. 17, they stated, "Casella, Wheelabrator, and Waste Management of NH run facilities that displace the value of resources by making waste itself a commodity. This mindset encourages high volumes of waste and inevitably leads to expansion plans that polarize and threaten communities."

They quote Zero Waste International Alliance: "The easiest, first step that can produce significant climate results RIGHT NOW is to STOP landfill-produced methane. Simply by getting COOL — Compostable Organics Out of Landfills — we can prevent potent methane emissions AND build healthier soils."

The working group's initial meeting discussed food waste diversion as one way to greatly decrease the amount of solid waste. Marc Morgan of Lebanon said that 15 percent of that city's solid waste is food scraps and they have drop-off sites for food waste. They accept both meat and dairy waste and compost food scraps on unused sections of their landfill site.

Few places accept meat and dairy waste, however, and Duncan Watson of Keene said banning items like food waste without having a place to send them creates problems. "We don't have the infrastructure to make diversion happen," he said.

T.P. Caldwell is a writer, editor, photographer, and videographer who formed and serves as project manager of the [Liberty Independent Media Project](#). Contact him at liberty18@me.com.

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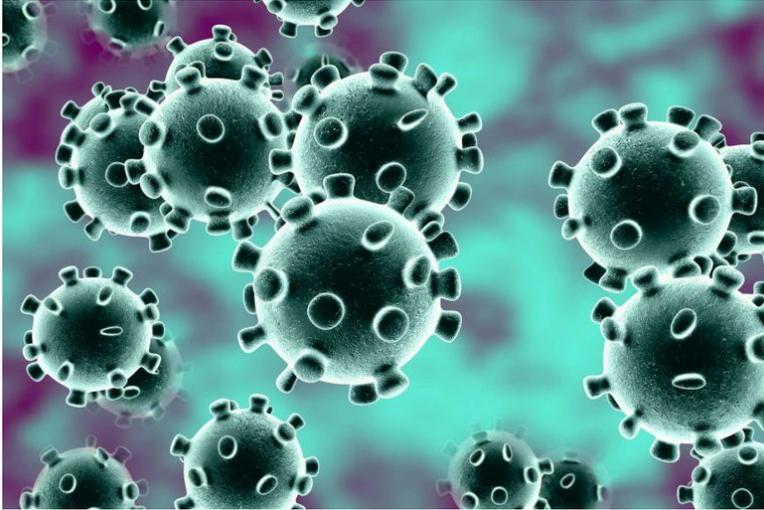
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Officials Say They'll Find Funds To Replace \$27M Nixed by Republican Councilors

By PAULA TRACY, InDepthNH.orgCONCORD - While the Executive Council's Republican majority rejected \$27 million in federal funds for boosting vaccines, effectively slowing the potential roll-out of clinics for 125,000 New Hampshire children ages 5-11, state officials said believe they can find a total of \$22 million from other accounts. That would leave a \$5 million shortfall, but Lori Shibanette, commissioner of the Department of Health and Human Services, said she is still hopeful for reconsideration of the \$27 million. She was able to find about \$4.6 million in federal funds which were passed by the Executive Council last week.



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On Tuesday, November 2, 2021, DHHS announced 341 new positive test results for COVID-19 for Monday, November 1.



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By TERRY FARISH, InDepthNH.org Amber MacQuarrie is 34 and studying business at Southern New Hampshire University.





AG Disputes Bedford's Claims About Uncounted Ballots

By GARRY RAYNO, InDepthNH.org CONCORD — Attorney General John M. Formella is contesting statements made by Bedford election officials regarding 190 uncounted absentee ballots from the 2020 general election.



Op-Ed: Lawsuit To Overturn Biden Vaccine Mandates Has Dangerous Consequences

By Rich DiPentima Dear Editor: This week, Attorney General John Formella announced that New Hampshire would join 9 other Republican controlled states in their lawsuit to overturn the Biden Administration's COVID-19 vaccine mandate on all federal contractors and contracted employees. This is another in a long line of myopic, dangerous and reckless actions taken by Republicans to undermine our efforts to end the worst public health crisis in our history. Considering the makeup of the current Supreme Court, with 5 extreme right wing Justices, including 3 Trump appointees, I would be very surprised if they do not decide in favor of the Plaintiffs. If they do, it would overturn the 1905 Jacobsen vs.

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