

# Residents raise stink over landfill expansion

By ROB IRWIN and GRAHAM S. PARKER

Scores of residents and business owners living within smelling distance of the city of Albany's landfill attended a public meeting last week to speak against the city's plan to expand it.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation held a scoping and public comment session Wednesday, Feb. 21, regarding the draft environmental impact statement of the landfill's proposed expansion into 15 acres of the protected Pine Bush Preserve.

Local environmental advocacy organizations Save the Pine Bush and Citizens Environmental Coalition have joined with residents and local municipalities to prevent the dump from expanding into the ecologically rare pine barren and also urge Albany to control the odor wafting from the existing landfill, which can sometimes be smelled miles away.

Opponents of the expansion gathered at the Polish Community Center on Washington Avenue Extension, many carrying signs that simply read "No" in bold, black letters.

Albany has been the focus of DEC consent orders in recent months and has seen thousands of dollars in fines because of the stink. Nearby residents, who have been at odds with the city for more than two years, contend that the odor is

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COLONIE

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Spotlight



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worse than ever.

Lynne Jackson, a volunteer with Save the Pine Bush, said she resented a specific part of the DEIS, which reads: "Odor control has been an issue for residents in the past."

"I think the people in this room will tell you that the odor problem is in the present," she said.

And throughout the night, many did.

Village of Colonie resident Eve Spector said she has a problem with expanding the dump when the smell is already an issue.

"I've been experiencing a problem with the stench of the dump for many years," said Spector. "It doesn't make any sense to me why you want to expand when what you already have stinks."

The smell wasn't the only issue at hand. Some comments focused on health concerns related to the dump.

"The vile smell barely covers the topic," said Carmelo Privitera, a resident of Avila Retirement Community. Privitera said that the landfill "unquestionably contributes significantly to the formation of dangerous gases."

Privitera, a former professor of biological sciences at the University of Buffalo, said, "Each one of us, to varying degrees, can be victimized by the volatile materials."

John Travers of Coeymans said the dump, as it is, has a negative impact on an area nursery school.

"These kids are out playing in this stink," said Travers. "They're being poisoned by it."

Another area man said expanding the landfill "boggles the mind."

"In recent years, we have thought of moving from the area, not through any fault of our own," he said, on the impact of living near the landfill. "The expansion clearly jeopardizes the health of those living in the immediate area."

People speaking at the meeting also called for dramatic changes in

the way the landfill is managed.

Tom Ellis, co-chair of the Citizens Environmental Coalition, said, "The right of people to breathe clean air outweighs the right of an incompetent city government to continue to mismanage their money."

Privitera said the answer to the problem lies with the politicians.

"Where are the visionaries?" he said. "That's my concern."

From an environmental standpoint, Jackson said, she worries that moving ahead with this proposal would put the Pine Bush area on a slippery slope.

"If this landfill expansion goes through, the city is going to want to take another slice of the Pine Bush in another eight years," said Jackson.

Christopher Hawver, executive director of the Pine Bush Preserve, said this proposal is "considerably better" than previous proposals, but added, "The commission is still not in support of any expansion of the landfill."

The village of Colonie, which does not use Albany's landfill and sends its trash to the town of Colonie landfill, is one of the areas hardest hit by the dump.

"Our feeling is we want the smell to stop. It's affecting the quality of life of so many people in the village," said Tom Tobin, village of Colonie trustee, over the phone.

He said people new to the area have been coming to village offices and asking about the odor.

"People call up and say, 'I was going to have a barbecue, and I couldn't have it outside,'" said Tobin.

Previous meetings between village residents and DEC officials have brought out hundreds who want to see an end put to the stink, said Tobin.

The village will host a Save the Pine Bush public meeting at the Village of Colonie Recreational Center Wednesday, March 14, to bring public attention to the matter of the odor.

"We don't send our garbage there. It's not like we are getting a thing out of it (the expansion)," said Tobin. "We get the smell, that's what we get."