

Landfill addition awaits approval

■ Agreement in place for 5-year expansion to Riga's garbage lot.

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Riga's status as a west side garbage destination is paying off.

A new agreement regarding a landfill there will increase payments to the town and allow Monroe County to pursue expansion of the facility.

Monroe County legislators will likely vote to approve the agreement, which restricts Riga from blocking expansion of the Mill Seat Landfill if the county chooses to do so, on Tuesday.

On the likelihood of an expansion, Mike Garland, county director of environmental services, would only say that the county thinks the landfill is of value to the county, and that any expansion is dependent on environmental approvals.

Expansion would take about five years.

Opened in 1993, the 98-acre landfill accepts about 597,000 tons of waste every year, including 120,000 tons from Rochester, and is estimated to reach capacity in 2018. If the landfill expands, it

would be contiguous with the existing landfill, would be the same height, and would not have a footprint larger than the current landfill's size plus 20 percent.

The trash would not be accepted at a faster rate than it is now.

The landfill, operated by Waste Management since 2002, accepts waste from across New York state, except for New York City, though out-of-county waste accounts for just 10 percent of the total collected waste. The landfill also accepts a portion of the 100,000 tons of sludge produced every year from the county's two wastewater treatment plants, the rest goes to High Acres landfill in Perinton.

The sludge helps the solid waste break down and produce methane, which the county sells to energy suppliers, Garland said.

Lawmakers last week approved the new agreement during two committee meetings, with one dissenter, Legislator Paul Haney.

Haney, D-Rochester, objected to the increased payments for the town, and noted that the solid waste operation has lost money in the past.

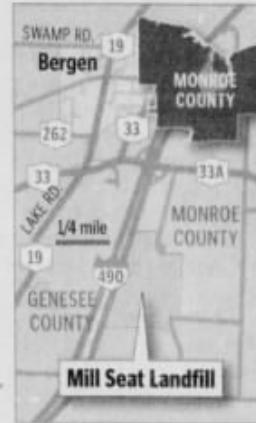
The county's Solid Waste Fund, which exclusively receives revenue and pays expenses related to solid waste, without impact to the general fund, has a \$1.6 million deficit in its unrestricted funds. The total fund, including funds that are restricted for a specific purpose, had a balance of \$3.7 million as of the end of 2010.

In response to Haney's concern, Garland said the town's cooperation is necessary for expansion.

Legislator Robert Colby, R-Ogden, said as a representative of residents around the landfill, the agreement is a "win-win".

The new agreement was approved unanimously by the town board on Jan. 3, and by a citizen's advisory group in November.

Fees generated at the landfill have eliminated the need for a property tax in the 5,500-person town and will allow the town to extend water from the Monroe County Water Authority to its res-



KEVIN M. SMITH graphics editor

idents, some of which have used well water.

Riga and Churchville residents also have their garbage picked up for free, and the new agreement calls for the county to also pay for recycling pick-ups, generating \$160,000 in yearly savings for the town.

The total increased cost to the county for Riga's benefits is \$200,000, less than \$18,000 of which will not be reimbursed by Waste Management, Garland said.

The new agreement also stipulates:

■ The town will receive \$3.65 per ton of garbage dumped at the landfill, or a percentage of what Waste Management

charges other haulers, whichever is greater. The town's maximum benefit under the current agreement is \$3.61 per ton.

■ The town will receive 3 cents per ton from energy generated at the landfill, which will cost the county less than \$18,000, the only benefit to the town that the county will pay without reimbursement from Waste Management.

■ A provision that compensates property owners who cannot sell their home at market rate because of the landfill will be kept in place. If the landfill is expanded, property owners who moved in since the original landfill was built would also be compensated if they sell their home and the expanded landfill affects their selling price.

Since the landfill opened, 17 property sellers have been compensated with a total of \$207,150, and 95 sellers have not required the protection, Garland said.

■ If the landfill expands, the county will share an additional 10 percent of its net revenue from sales of methane gas generated at the landfill. □

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