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Upstate landfill used by Ulster County not shutting down by 2025, official tells trash agency



Trucks are lined up at the Seneca Meadows landfill, between Rochester and Syracuse, in 2016. The Ulster County Resource recovery Agency currently brings its solid waste to the upstate site. (File)

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TOWN OF ULSTER, N.Y. – A Seneca Meadow Landfill official told the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency that the Upstate solid waste disposal site used by Ulster County won't shut down by 2025.

"I'm sure everybody's seen a lot of Google alerts about our imminent closing in 2025 and frankly that's just not going to be the case," Landfill district manager Kyle Black said Thursday during an hour-long presentation.

Black said that the current permit is expected to be extended by the state Department of Environmental Conservation to allow the landfill to utilize an area in the middle of the existing 2,500-acre complex that is more than 200 miles northwest of Kingston.

"That will give us approximately 31 million tons of disposal capacity and we're permitted for (2.13 million) tons per year," he said. "So that gives us about another 15 years of site life."

Ulster officials have been looking to site a landfill in Ulster County ahead of that deadline but have faced opposition from many towns.

The proposed area, which was among the original areas of the complex used, is about 10% of the entire disposal area which has been expanded in sections since it opened in 1953 for use by Tantalo Construction. That is in the area being considered for use under the revised permit.

Black said that the facility is working to utilize waste-to-energy programs that include burning methane and tires as part of a plant that generates 17 megawatts of electricity.

Concerns about the ultimate closing of Seneca Meadows has been discussed by the agency since 2012, with board members Charles Landi at the time suggesting that a local disposal location could save money on hauling fees. The cost for the 2022 budget is at \$5.2 million for transportation and \$3.65 million for disposal fees.

Over the past three years, county legislators became increasingly concerned while developing the long-term solid waste management plan, which often put them at odds with the agency board members. After handing the draft revisions to lawmakers in January 2020, then-agency Chairman Fred Wadnola said, “our main emphasis this year is trying to find a site for a landfill.”

Black noted that keeping the landfill open has been as controversial in its host community as its continued use has been for Ulster County officials. He said there have been grassroots efforts to make sure the landfill closes at the end of 2025, with the Seneca Falls Town Board several years ago writing a law intended to not allow the use when the current state permit expires.

Black said a change in the Town Board makeup this year is more favorable to having the local law overturned. “Politics are always fun,” he said.

“We had a board flip three years ago that put a local law into play that we continue challenging to this day that (could) use police powers to shut our business down,” Black said. “The board that just was elected is more favorable to continuing this business partnership with us. So we’re in negotiations with them to potentially repeal that local law and/or extend our host community agreement.”

Seneca Meadows was a central part of the 2021 Town Board race when the Texas-based hauler Waste Connections donated \$200,554.90 in contributions late in the campaign as support for two candidates, who defeated incumbents that were instrumental in writing the law to end use of the landfill.

“That law was crafted citing odors, citing truck traffic, saying this is why this business needs to shut down in 2025,” Black said. “It’s kind of unprecedented that they’re using police powers to shut a business down.”



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