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Draft of Seneca Falls comprehensive plan addresses Seneca Meadows landfill

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SENECA FALLS — The draft of a new comprehensive plan calls for the town to look ahead to the day the Seneca Meadows Inc. landfill along Route 414 closes.

Unveiled in early September, it will be subject to a public hearing at 6 p.m. Oct. 3 in the Municipal Building as part of the Town Board's regular monthly meeting.

The draft, prepared by a local steering committee and consultants from the MRB Group, suggests four action items the town should consider regarding the 400-acre landfill, the largest in the state. The privately owned facility is operated by Texas-based Waste Connections and can accept up to 6,000 tons of household waste per day.

The action items:

- Town leadership must develop a fiscal sustainability plan which ensures that any revenue generated from one-time or temporary sources be used for catalytic, one-time investments and not for normal operational needs.

"Recognizing that closure could be as soon as 2025, this plan should be expedited," the report said.

Drafters of the plan said recent audits by the state Comptroller's Office have called into question revenue and expense recognition in the town's annual budgets. "Historically, town leadership has struggled to develop and affect a firm policy on use of landfill revenues. To date, it is unclear as to whether, or how much, landfill revenue is attributed to ongoing town operations," the report said.

The report says town officials should work quickly to isolate any current uses of landfill revenue from ongoing operations and work to craft a multi-year plan that replaces those revenues with either long-term revenue or reductions in cost.

“Unequivocally, moving forward, the town should not use landfill or any other temporary revenue sources to directly offset the property tax rate or support any ongoing operations,” the plan says, noting that doing so would reduce taxes only temporarily and result in a gap in the future years that will require either a reduction in services or an increase in the tax rate.

- Town leaders should establish a series of reserve funds, capitalized with revenue generated by Seneca Meadows, targeted at reinforcing infrastructure and fostering economic and community development.

The comprehensive plan recommends the use of landfill revenue for such things as a waste-diversion strategy, small-business assistance, workforce and market rate housing development, parks and open-space development, storm-water and flood mitigation, water and sewer system rehabilitation and capacity enhancements, cultural amenities, and aesthetic improvements.

- Town leadership should form a committee to discuss the eventual closure of the landfill and the impacts on the community. A decommission plan must be developed to assure there is a responsible path

forward after the landfill closes. Committee members should include representatives of the Town Board, the town manager and SMI.

- Town leaders should work with community partners to create a waste-diversion strategy to lessen the town's production of solid waste


Drafters said this plan emphasizes the town's need to protect the town's natural resources and support initiatives that enhance sustainability and environmental conservation in the town.

As part of a waste-diversion strategy, the town should work with Seneca County to expand capacity and increase sustainability initiatives on a county-wide level. The strategic plan should include municipal composting, recycling, solid-waste reduction, and town, county and regional solid waste programs.

The comprehensive plan is subject to amendments before it is finalized and approved formally by the Town Board.

Landfill opponents plan to picket before today's hearing. Organizers say they will ask the board not to rush to adopt the final comprehensive plan and allow the public more time to review and comment on the draft before a vote. They will urge the board to support a 2025 landfill closure.

Two recent public information sessions were conducted by SMI on its application to expand the landfill and on a new host community agreement with the town that increases SMI's revenue to the town significantly and commits to environmental steps to deal with odor and traffic. At those sessions, SMI opponents far outnumbered supporters.



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