

BPW

January 23, 2010

Terry Culhane, Chair
Board of Public Works
City of Northampton, MA

Edward Huntley, Director
Department of Public Works
125 Locust Street
Northampton, MA 01060

RE: Expansion of the Glendale Road landfill

I am writing to support proceeding with a recommendation to the City to expand the existing landfill located on Glendale Road. I am resident of the City of Northampton and have professional involvement in the areas of composting and management of organic wastes. I have read the various reports that have been prepared for the City including the July 2009 "Solid Waste Management Alternative Study" prepared by Stantec and HDR consultants. I have attended one of the public informational meetings held this summer and have followed the issues surrounding the landfill for some time.

While it is obvious that landfill disposal can have various negative environmental impacts, landfills are a very necessary part of solid waste management and the expansion of the existing landfill is in the best interest on both the City and the region. As indicted in the studies performed for the City, closure of the landfill will have significant negative economic impacts on the City. Closure of this locally controlled landfill will have the immediate effect of diverting wastes generated in the City and other local Towns to other landfills (or incinerators) at further distance and very likely greater costs to residents, local business and City agencies (e.g. our schools). Most importantly the City will lose control over how solid waste is handled and processed. The closure will mean the loss of revenues that support current city positions and programs for increased recycling and composting of organics. It is highly likely that closure of the City owned landfill, loss of revenues and lose of control over the disposition of the waste will result in less recycling.

The Solid Waste Management Alternatives Study prepared for the Department of Public Works provides significant evidence to support the expansion. Various options that include expansion are the most cost effective for the City. Those options which include closure of the landfill provide fewer benefits to the City as a whole and have the primary benefit of reducing impacts to the landfill neighbors and residents on Glendale Road. I do not believe that any study has shown that closure of the landfill will eliminate risks of contamination to the aquifer. There is reasonable confidence that expansion, when managed properly, will not increase environmental risks or increase nuisance condition to the neighbors of the landfill.

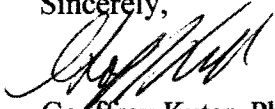
Because the City has a landfill and can generate revenues it is in a better position than other Cities and Towns to develop a comprehensive management plan. Closure of the landfill will very likely reduce diversion of wastes for composting and recycling. As indicated in the report, "A

major aspect of any solid waste management program is education and outreach. Creating and sustaining a solid waste management program requires constant attention to getting the word out to the stakeholders. Educational and outreach efforts to modify consumer behavior take several forms." With the closure of the landfill there are fewer funds to perform that education and outreach effort. With the closure of the landfill the revenues to support current City programs and to expand City programs to divert organics and improve recycling will be gone. It is quite evident that various State funded programs have been significantly reduced and if the City expects to increase recycling efforts it will have to rely on funds generated from the landfill operations which will disappear with closure.

The recent referendum regarding landfill closure was poorly presented to the electorate with little public debate on the issues. I doubt if most voters were aware of economic benefits that the City has obtained from the landfill, the various studies that were performed and the recommendations of those studies. In moving forward I believe the Board should conduct additional public meetings.

It would also be beneficial to perform additional studies to look specifically at increasing organics diversion, including residential programs, in more detail. Composting, possibly combined with anaerobic digestion, should be looked at as complementary processes to landfill disposal and increased effort should be made to site facilities in the City or region.

Sincerely,



Geoffrey Kuter, Ph.D.
292 Elm Street
Northampton, MA 01060

cc: Mayor Higgins
Jesse Adams
Paul Narkewicz
Paul Spector