

2/28/85

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Conference set

DEQE probe reveals landfill violations

WESTFORD - The Westford Board of Health was notified last week by the state Department of Quality Engineering (DEQE) that violations may have occurred at the sanitary landfill on Cold Spring Road.

The letter from DEQE, which indicated that the possible infractions may have a negative

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effect on the town's water supply, was based on an inspection on Jan. 29 by agency representatives.

A meeting between local and state officials to discuss the issue is scheduled for next Wednesday at the DEQE office in Worcester.

Meanwhile, health board members hope to confer with selectmen about the matter before that meeting. Selectmen have had responsibility for overseeing landfill operations since 1976.

According to Massachusetts General Laws, responsibility for siting and overseeing landfill operations lies with the Board of Health in each community.

However, the Westford landfill was turned over to selectmen after town meeting rejected a move by the health board chairman to close the facility.

According to last week's letter from DEQE, engineers observed the following possible violations while inspecting the landfill:

- lack of an approved plan;
- improper spreading and compacting of refuse;
- improper depths of cover;
- improper disposal of bulky waste;
- improper supervision of operation.

The letter also noted: "Filling areas not approved in the Department's Interim Plan approv-

al of March 8, 1976, has occurred. In addition, two separate working areas were observed, one of which was covered with stumps and demolition debris. Both areas were without adequate daily cover and the demolition debris was left uncompacted. The lack of adequate cover material may have led to the leachate breakout observed in the wetlands adjacent to the landfill. In addition, a review of the Department's files indicates the landfill is being operated without approved plans."

At the conference in the department's Central Regional Office at 75 Grove St., Worcester, the Board of Health will be requested to "show cause why a Departmental order should not be issued... for failure to comply with state statutes governing the operation of the landfill and regulations for the disposal of solid wastes there."

In a letter sent to selectmen this week, Charles Colburn, chairman of the Board of Health, stated he plans to attend the 10 a.m. conference and he urged selectmen to attend also.

Colburn's letter also stated: "It is not clear to us (board of health) what is our responsibility vs. the Board of Selectmen in this issue since operation of the landfill is under you."

But, when he received the DEQE letter, Colburn said: "Because the potential for impact on the town and its water system is so great, the town should respond to the issue properly."

Local residents had complained to selectmen last week about possible grading and site preparation at the landfill. But selectmen assured the residents that no transfer station or temporary collection station would be constructed before a town meeting vote.

The current landfill is being considered as a possible location for a transfer station.

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Landfill in violation of state regulations

By Colin Hickey

In the aftermath of a Jan. 29 inspection of the Westford landfill the state Department of Environmental Quality Engineering (DEQE) has notified the Westford Board of Health (BOH) of five violations of landfill regulations. In addition, DEQE has requested the board to appear at a March 8 conference.

According to a DEQE letter to the BOH dated Feb. 20, engineers for the state agency found the town was negligent in regard to spreading and compacting of refuse, depths of landfill cover, disposal of bulky waste, and imperviousness of the landfill.

The lack of adequate cover material in two separate working areas may have led to the leachate breakout observed in the wetlands adjacent to the landfill, according to the letter.

The letter also disclosed that after a review of DEQE files, it was discovered that "the landfill is being operated without approved plans."

The letter further noted that siting was done in areas not approved in the 1976 Department of Environmental Approval.

The settlement of the Board of Health is that landfill matters be long in the "selectmen's domain," Menzle said.

He added, however, that he personally believes the BOH should take a "more active" role in regard to monitoring the landfill and ensuring that it is run properly.

Menzle suggested that from operation was the result of from too much forward thinking on the town's part. When the town saw that a transfer station or curbside pickup solution to waste disposal was on the horizon, Menzle said it decided to take control of the landfill from an outside contractor.

According to Menzle, the selectmen took responsibility for the landfill from the BOH sometime in the early 1970's.

According to the DEQE letter, the purpose of the conference is to show cause why a Departmental Order should not be issued against you for failure to comply with the provisions of the Regulations for the Disposal of Solid Wastes by Searcy Landfill.

Central Regional Office in Westford.

The result according to

DEQE threatens Westford landfill action

By VIRGINIA KIMBALL
Sun Correspondent

WESTFORD — The town must come up with a plan to close the sanitary landfill by the time town meeting convenes or face legal action by the Department of Environmental Quality Engineering (DEQE).

Yesterday, following a meeting between DEQE representatives and town officials to discuss recently discovered violations at the landfill, Mark Begley, senior sanitary engineer for

Three sites listed as location for proposed transfer station

WESTFORD — The Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) voted unanimously last night to consider three sites for a proposed transfer station. One of the sites is a 26-acre town-owned parcel surrounded by property owned by the H.E. Fletcher Co., a 25-acre town-owned tract near Cawdry Hill Road, and the current landfill site on Cold Spring Road.

Except for the landfill site, the committee dismissed all other proposed locations for the transfer station which lay in residential areas.

The list will be handed over to the committee's consultants for evaluation.

The committee's decision was announced in a meeting swamped with more than 60 residents, most of them from the Forrest Road area, angry over the possibility of locating a waste transfer station in their neighborhood.

SWAC Chairman Bert Russo said the committee expects a recommendation from consultants C. E. Maguire within a

DEQE, Division of Solid and Hazardous Waste, said no state order would be issued against the town unless it fails to come up with a plan for closing the landfill.

"The Department could initiate enforcement actions, if the town has not developed a closure plan and brought an article to town meeting for appropriate funding for closure by town meeting time," Begley said.

"The department will hold legal action in abeyance until then." Until the closure plan for the

month. "That doesn't mean that if anyone comes up with a good suggestion or a gift of five acres to the town on the 29th day that we can't accept it," he said.

The parcel near Cawdry Hill Road, about 800 feet from Route 40, is zoned industrial. Town meeting will be asked to rezone the area to residential.

The site is bounded by West Street and Route 40 in the Graniteville section. SWAC members said more study is needed but they recommended access to the site from Route 40.

landfill is developed, said Begley, the town has agreed to inspections by DEQE and the Board of Health.

Also, DEQE has directed the town to include funding for an engineering consultant to supervise the landfill operation until the facility is closed, said Begley.

George Wyman, superintendent of the sanitary landfill Selectman David Earl, Board of Health Chairman Charles Colburn and Executive Secretary Paul Alphen met Wednesday with DEQE officials Begley and John Desmond in Worcester after the state agency sent a letter to the local Board of Health requesting a "show cause conference."

"The town officials who attended this meeting seemed

knowledgeable in planning and handling this entire situation," said Begley. "They were positive about resolving their problems."

Begley said a summary of the meeting would be made public within two weeks and sent to selectmen and the health board.

Corrections begun

Begley reported that Wyman told DEQE engineers he had begun measures to correct violations discovered in an inspection on Jan. 29.

"He said he had put more cover on the dumping area, taken efforts to control the dumping of demolition and bulky wastes and will move the dumping area to one location in a higher part of the site, in a place formerly used," related Begley.

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Spring, summer testing slated for landfill wells

By Colin Hickey

It has been three years since the last water quality study of town wells located near wetlands where an empty toxic chemical marked drum was found in February.

The June 1982 study conducted by geotechnical-geohydrological consultants Goldberg-Zelno & Associates, Inc. (GZA). Testing did not discover any evidence of contamination of the well field from the landfill.

Late last winter a group of Westford residents raised concerns about town well water near the landfill after the discovery of a drum near the dump marked with a label designating it once contained the toxic chemical 1,1,1-trichloroethane. The rusty color of nearby wetlands water also contributed to the concern of citizens.

The town has appropriated \$3500 for water tests scheduled to be done at the site this spring or summer. GZA will once again perform the tests according to Water Superintendent Howard Fletcher.

In a phone interview with the Eagle, Board of Health member Dr. Charles Menzie explained that water tests are difficult to conduct in the winter because there is too much water. Late summer is the best time for testing, according to Menzie, because the water level is at its lowest.

Menzie said there is "enough interest" to do the testing during the spring, however.

As for the possibility of the wells being contaminated, Menzie said the "likelihood was small." He added, however, that the wells are "something that need to be monitored" because of the grave consequences that could result from contamination.

Menzie said that this monitoring should be done on a more frequent basis in the future regardless of what is found this year. He also noted that this



Menzie said towns with a lot of heavy industry are more likely to have problems with water contamination because the industrial solvents often used by such industries contain petroleum hydrocarbons which are the most likely form of waste to "migrate" into a well field.

He added that the quantity of contaminants would have to be reasonably large for it to become a health problem.

One-day commercial dump permits climb

By Gail Ferney

In the month since they restricted the amount of dumping allowed at the landfill, selectmen have issued 100 one-day commercial landfill permits.

On March 5 selectmen voted to restrict the amount of trash dumped by commercial companies to no more than seven yards per week. That decision was a modification of a request made by Highway Superintendent George Wyrman. Wyrman suggested all construction and demolition debris be prohibited at the landfill.

Wyrman said his recommendation was made in an attempt "to cut down what's going into the landfill. With all the industrial building going on on Route 110, it's too much for us to handle."

Wyrman called the selectmen's modification

of his request "a good compromise."

"It's a step in the right direction," he said. "I can see their side of it — they just can't eliminate everything from going in there."

The seven-yard limit does cut down on the amount of construction debris coming into the landfill, says Wyrman.

Prior to the March 5 vote, companies would "bring in truckload after truckload of trash every day." Wyrman said these trucks were often roll-ins or 10-wheelers, each able to hold up to 30-yards of debris.

Now, dumping is limited to what can be carried in one six-wheel dump truck once each week. (For homeowners carrying out their own remodeling projects, Wyrman estimates a pickup truck holds between two and three yards of trash.)

According to the Highway Superintendent,

large contractors must now hire private trash companies, like B.F.I., to collect their excess debris.

Ann Bennett, secretary in the selectmen's office and issuer of the commercial landfill permits, says a computer keeps track of all such permits to prohibit a company from taking advantage of the new system.

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