Environmental Health Task Force
Monday, July 6, 2026 - 11:00 am

Joe Pete Wilson - Chairman

Chairman Wilson called this task force to order at 11:01 am with the following in attendance: Clayton Barber, Matt Brassard, Tim Follos, Mary Lamphear, Tracie McGill, Clayton Menser, Tim Pierce, Richard Preston, Cathy Reusser, Davina Thurston, Joe Pete Wilson, Mike Mascarenas, and Jim Dougan.

Deputy present: Dina Garvey

WILSON: We got a lot of, a very detailed agenda with a lot of stuff on it. I think some of can move quickly. Jim, do you want to start off and give us the Fish Hatchery update?

DOUGAN: Sure, the Fish Hatchery; we did put a bid out. We didn't receive any bids. We did list out the locations and the number of fish based upon on historically what we've done in the past. DEC has semi-committed that they would stock the two ponds that are public access all the time, because it fits within their regulations. We're trying to get a letter from them of exactly what they would stock, so that we can redo a bid with less fish. In the meantime, we're also, our Supervising Fish Hatchery Technician has been working with some of his contacts throughout the industry to see who's interested in providing us some fish. What we really think happened is those companies are used to someone calling and saying, hey bring us 200 fish. They're not used to looking at the fairly thick bid package and all the state, local, federal requirements that we put out there. So, we're working on that and trying to find some more interest to make sure that we're still able to stock those facilities.

WILSON: Which are the two ponds that DEC said they could possibly cover?

DOUGAN: Roe Pond in Moriah and Deep Hollow, here in Elizabethtown are both public access all the time, so they would fit their regulation. We're also getting creative. We still do have the sticking truck that we've used in the past, so if we can find some more bidders by us utilizing that truck rather than having them making that delivery, we may do that.

WILSON: Alright.

MASCARENAS: I do think we probably need kind of a drop dead deadline on that, only because we're in July and those stockings are going to happen next spring or they're not. Those fishing derbies expect that they're going to continue to operate. Another option that I think we can look at is us utilizing the occupancy funds that we get. That is what I would be using to buy the fish anyways for those communities listed here to purchase their own. There may be value in doing that in terms of if they can do that on their own. I think it's something that we need to look at, at this point, being that time is running out, and we didn't just bid it once, we bid it twice.

HUGHES: Just a quick rebuttal on that one, wouldn't it be the responsibility of the town to do that since they County is getting out of this business and the towns receive their own occupancy tax money?

MASCARENAS: You can

HUGHES: Not a popular idea (laughter).

MASCARENAS: I know, that's going to be up to 18 different weighted votes, right (laughter)?

HUGHES: I won't do so well.

MASCARENAS: As we set it up today, I am paying for it, the County, Essex County is paying for it.

HUGHES: Right

MASCARENAS: So, under that assumption we could pivot and partner with our fish and game clubs, locally and those types of things to put the ownest on them to be able to get those fish, get them delivered and do what they have to do for their tournaments, locally. Because it does only impact only 8 towns and when I say, it only impacts 8, I understand how important it is to those communities that have these derbies. They're extremely important, well attended, and so we need to figure it out, I think within the next month or so which way we're going to go with it.

LAMPHEAR: Do we have how much it is for Newcomb; how much we're paying?

DOUGAN: You're not paying anything.

LAMPHEAR: No, no, how much we would be paying.

HUGHES: The cost.

MASCARENAS: We can get an estimate pretty quickly.

DOUGAN: We have an estimate based off a firm that didn't actually give us a bid that to do all of the fish was about $60,000, which was the amount of money that were carrying from occupancy taxes, historically for the last decade, it was coming directly out of occupancy tax to go to Fish Hatchery, about that same amount, so about $60,000 is what. We used their retail rates that one firm had and what they were willing to talk to us about but then they didn't provide us a bid, which makes us think that they were interested in all of our requirements.

LAMPHEAR: I would just like to know how much, just to be able to bring that for conversation if we were paying occupancy tax. We have some water up there so that we could do our fishing derby.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, Mary, we can get exactly what you get stocked and we have a number per fish based upon the age that we could give you a pretty solid number.

DOUGAN: It's basically on here, the number of the fish. It's on that top chart.

MASCARENAS: Oh, yeah, it's right there.

HUGHES: But times how much per fish.

MASCARENAS: Yup, right. It would be a lot cheaper than you think.

BRASSARD: I mean I am fine with what you mentioned, having it go to towns. I mean I am assuming that the County would give that portion.

MASCARENAS: Well, I just had somebody else say no, so you guys can fight that out.

BRASSARD: I mean I have no problem doing the legwork and finding someone to do that and all that.

HUGHES: Right or graduating the County out of it over the course of 3 years and the towns pick it up or something like that. Teach a man to fish (laughter), I have heard that today.

BRASSARD: Well, the fact is, 2027 I know that these fishing derbies, I know that some of them, I don't know if all of them have already happened, but you have to plan now.

HUGHES: Absolutely, I agree with you.

BRASSARD: For Moriah's next year.

MASCARENAS: And we had that discussion prior to you walking in. We've got Etown's, I'm making the assumption that the County's splitting the bill right now, but as you're well aware, my vote doesn't count. My weighted vote is zero, and so we'll see how that goes.

WILSON: So, to sum up fishing derbies, Jim to sum up fishing derbies, your current fish manager is going to try and do some salesmanship to some of the private suppliers, and we'll see where that takes us?

DOUGAN: Well, actually we're also talking with some of the Vermont fish hatcheries who may be interested in selling us fish, as well.

WILSON: So, there's still a chance that it could work out.

DOUGAN: They're looking for revenue.

WILSON: Is there anything that I need to do or do you need help from anyone here to keep that moving?

DOUGAN: No, I don't think so. Perhaps it will be a conversation with DEC, again. I am trying to get a letter from them of exactly what they will provide those two ponds that meets their regulations.

WILSON: Great

DOUGAN: They said they can, they said they would, but they haven't done anything yet.

BRASSARD: Right

WILSON: That would be great, because that's one of the biggest.
Any other thoughts on fish hatchery or derbies?

FOLLOS: I just want to make the comment that you know I attended the Wilmington fishing derby this year for the first time in about 40-years and I was surprised by the number of people from other days who were there. So, it's not just, I can't speak to the other derbies, but in Wilmington it's not just people from Wilmington that are participating.

WILSON: That's a good point.

MASCARENAS: It's a very good point.

BARBER: Ken was speaking for himself on the cost?

HUGHES: Oh, totally was speaking for myself, absolutely.

BARBER: Okay

WILSON: Alright, then on to shared services. We talked about it at our first meeting. Years ago, we brought his topic up and we've kicked it around a bunch. I don't really have anything concrete at this point, but it's something that I think we need to continue to work on as we see how difficult it is going to be to fill retiring water and wastewater operator shoes and how difficult it is for a town like Keene or Essex or Chesterfield to afford a vacuum truck. I mean I think there's a lot of room here for us to plan out and adjust to what's coming down the road. So, I would appreciate it if people would keep thinking about it and as you have ideas let's put them on the table.

THURSTON: I love this idea. I think it is a nice place to start; I have two ideas. The first one would be a resolution of shared service, like we do similar to highway shared services for calling, asphalt and sand and things like that, but the other thing that I think we could do is set up meetings. You know, so my wastewater operator goes to Keene and hangs out with them for 4 hours and you know just kind of make it around each town in Essex County, have everybody do the rounds, you know so they can learn from each other and also familiarize themselves.

WILSON: Yeah, and before Covid, Todd Hodgson, Anna Reynolds, myself, Ticonderoga participated in this. I am trying to remember what other towns, but we were doing some, trying to map out the gaps in technical expertise and where towns could help each other and then Covid kind of detailed that, because it was a lot of face to face, but I think operators were interested in that and it also helped us start to identify needs that a shared service program could address.

MASCARENAS: I understood it a little different. So, it is nice to hear you guys say that. So, when you say shared service, I think you're, it's something that the County is going to take over.

WILSON: Yeah, and that's not what we're aiming for.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, I've heard both sides. So, I have spoken to the Planning Department. I think that was their thought around it, was that the County would develop a certain amount of wastewater/water operators that would then be able to towns if they needed that service and we recognize the need. I've meet with Todd Hodgson about a month ago on this topic. We spoke over an hour on this topic alone and probably a few hours on several topics because we don't catch up much. Love the ideas, and they definitely are great for our taxpayers, the issue becomes is what can we expect of that one individual to do, who we count on for am awful lot of things. Again, I rarely see Mr. Hodgson, and there's a reason of that. So, I think we've really got to be careful about capacity and what we expect one individual to do. What we say at a meeting sometimes sounds really good and when you go to implement it you overburden those that we rely on the most. So, anything we do in regard to that I am asking that we just really consider time or giving them the resources so people like Todd and step away from other things, because he's also been like a big player right now on our radio project and then he's doing the HVAC up at the jail and then he's in your towns with your operators. So, again, I don't want to overburden one individual by saying, hey, he's got this skill set we need to capitalize on it. If that's what we want he would love to do it, I'm sure, but he wouldn't come in here and tell us no. He would say, yup, I'll do it and then we'll all get really frustrated saying, why isn't this moving quicker? Because we're expecting a little too much from him.

HUGHES: I would briefly state that I think we really need to think of ways to incentive education and opportunities to support education. I feel like when we get to shared services, we're working smarter not harder, but I am also thinking we're admitting a little bit of defeat that, yes, we know that there are not enough people to do the jobs, so we need to share to cover the gaps that do exist. I want to take a step earlier and we talked about this a bit, how can we incentivize young people to get into the professions, into this water/wastewater courses at North Country and/or elsewhere, so we can hopefully say, hey, we're overflowing with people, we don't need shared

services unless there is a financial incentive to do so. Whatever we can do to incentivize education and involvement in a tenure tract to get them the water and/or wastewater certifications that they can get, I think is really important.

WILSON: Jim, did you want to add anything?

BARBER: I just wanted to, the Town of Chesterfield went in halves with the Town of AuSable, we just bought a vac truck. They are quite expensive and I know the class to run the vac truck was not an easy task and in fact, if I am not mistaken, just my Water Superintendent was the only one that's actually properly trained to run the vac truck. It was quite a show, I didn't stay for the whole class, but it was 2-2 ½ hour class to actually operate it and operate properly and then is, according to the instructor, you can damage a vac truck very easily and quickly by not operating it properly.

WILSON: Yeah, and I think you're bringing up what would be an example of shared services that could come out of, I didn't know that you guys were doing that and if we start building some mutual aid relationships that could be a help.

BARBER: Right, and I am sure that Dave Winters would be more than happy to go and show people how to run them. The Town of AuSable actually runs the septic system and they're being trained now, the sewer operators on that side.

WILSON: Great, thanks.

MENSER: The shared service side is very important in the training in advance is going to be very important because Crown Point is getting ready to be enforced by DEC to replace the wastewater treatment facility that they just finished in October and now they're already planning a $22 million system that we're going to have to replace it with in the next 7 years, and the current system requires one operator, it has to be a Level 2, the new system requires two Level 2 operators and they just not really exist. So, we're in the process of trying to train somebody up but the younger generation doesn't want to hear it, so we're going to have to start pushing this kind of education on people graduating high school and from college because that's what it is going to take.

THURSTON: I just want to touch on that, and I think one of the best things that we could do to interest young people to join the technical process like wastewater and water operators is to offer tours to juniors and seniors in high school of our local plants. Have them come out, take a tour and perhaps learn more about it and then encourage them to attend North Country and take those classes. So, that's the first thing and then the second thing is Clayton, I am really glad that you have a vac truck, I would like to have a shared service agreement with you where the Town of St. Armand could call on you and pay you, a day or something, if we have an emergency and maybe offset some of your costs.

WILSON: Yeah, and that was what I was thinking in terms of a network where we identify the assets a community or communities can bring and have sort of templates for MOUs between

communities so that you're not covering the costs of somebody else's operation, but they're getting the help they need in a timely and more affordable way.
And one thought that comes to mind, to the west of us, the Development Authority of the North Country, DANC, they provide water and wastewater operators. Thay have a pool of 5 licensed operators, and they contract with individual towns to run their facilities, and they do the same thing with solid waste. You know, they run and that's all, or those are operators within that, and they charge for their services, but it works, it's a dependable way for small, rural counties to get the operators, like you're facing.
And Jim, did you have anything to add?

DOUGAN: It sounds like you're almost describing something like the town highway superintendents have now, like a local association. I don't know if that's something that you would want to promote an idea like that. A lot of them know each other right now, but maybe if they had a regular meeting, a regular venue, something where they could get together and they could talk certain topics. They train each other on things they're facing that somebody else will face but haven't yet. I don't know, but maybe that would be worth doing. The town highway superintendents have that.

WILSON: Any last thoughts on this? But it's good to keep having these conversations so we do keep this moving, because I think it's going to become more and more important.
Then Davina has been working on a creative idea that she wanted to introduce to people, and she's got some handouts.

THURSTON: Okay, thank you, Joe Pete. Last week I had a meeting with someone pretty high up in New York State Solid Waste Committee and I set up this meeting about a month ago and I was really interested to hear what New York State was coming up with to us with our solid waste issues. After this meeting I was quite disappointed because what their plan was, was to educate people about recycling and encourage people to recycle more and also to encourage manufacturers to use less packaging and that was all they had. That was it, and I was very upset after this meeting to learn that there was no real plan in the works for us. So, I stayed until 7:00 that night, in my office, and I worked on this vision, and I believe this is possible. I absolutely know that it will be incredibly expensive, but what this is, and I can email everybody this, it's quite extensive. I have shared it with Mike and Jim and Joe Pete and Steve McNally, but it's a strategic vision for Essex County for a way to have us never put anymore products or trash into a landfill every again, once this take root. I am calling it the Adirondack Resource and Recovery and Manufacturing Center. So, basically what it is, it's a factory where we take and separate everything. So, glass goes to the crusher, steel gets recycled, plastics turned into products that we can sell and that's what I've kind of given you guys just these 4 pages. So, I came up benches, picnic tables, trash receptacles, whatever, I don't really care what we made as long as we're making something and selling something and it's a product that people can use.
So, the idea of this is to literally use our trash to manufacture a product. So, what doesn't get recycled and turned into a product either is recycled to somewhere else, Ticonderoga has a mill, there's a place in Plattsburgh that takes mixed paper and they make boxes, so, there's a use for every single item. When I talked to Jim about this earlier today, he reminded me of his idea a few

years ago of using biowaste and compost to create like a sod facility and a composting facility. So, this is a way for us to use our trash to make something that we can sell, whatever doesn't get sold or recycled, we can burn to run the manufacturing facility, and I know everybody's against burning, but with new technology, new scrubbers, new scientific ways of utilizing these materials, I think we could really be a pilot program for the entire United States and I know it's huge, and I know it's big, and I know it's expensive, and I want it all, and I want it all for us, and we can partner with Hamilton County, Franklin County, Clinton County, St. Lawrence County, Warren County. We could do something amazing for everyone in our area, and what I am really looking for from all of you is to buy into this vision, and you know agree that we should stop doing what we're doing because it doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense to keep burying trash. Within 3-5 years, Franklin County is going to say, I am sorry, we don't have any place for your trash anymore. What are we going to do then? With this idea we don't even have to ask that question ever again. We're going to want trash from Clinton County and Hamilton County and St. Lawrence County, bring us your trash. Let us turn it into something that we can sell, something that everyone needs.

WILSON: Questions for Davina?

REUSSER: I would just like to compliment her on her efforts. Jim and I have had discussions, it started over the piece of paper that tells people, you know where to put what particular product and I also come back to personal responsibly. How do we get people not to bring as much plastic home? How do we kill that service that we're given when we go to get less, and we're given a plastic container? How do we stop that? Because personal responsibly is a big part of this, on the user side. So, we could resolve our own, start to resolve, start to educate. So, I like the endeavor, it feels like a hell of a lift.

THURSTON: Big lift.

REUSSER: But Essex County's known for being a driving force, we have had a lot of great ideas. We're small, we're resourceful, we're mighty, we seem to get stuff done, so I hope this grows some arms, and legs, and I support the idea.

WILSON: And as a thought we have taken a concrete step. The glass crusher was a model for this, eliminating trucking, making a usable final product that stays local. It's replacing us buying gravel, you know, we've got a model, we've done a step of this, and I think building on that, and exploring how we can do it, is a worthwhile thing.

MENSER: Myself and Matt, attending the briefing at Sylvamo, now, with a company called Bright Sands, that is new to the area that is going to be making fertilizer out of waste products and that would be a good place for anything that is, I will say, biodegradable or that. We would dispose of that stuff through them and determine what stuff could be good for the County.

THURSTON: Absolutely.

MENSER: So, I think that would be a good place to find out, okay, how can we partner with them. Do our strategy for solid waste and get rid of the other stuff because they're going to want it.

THURSTON: Right, absolutely, and along those lines, there are a lot of different partnerships that we can form for different products. You know, the steel, the metal, there's a scrap metal place in Cadyville that I can think of. I don't know where they send their stuff. Rubber, there's a company near the border in Canada and they take tires and they turn it into mulch for like playgrounds and things like that. So, you know, this is an octopus with many, many tentacles, and we can partner different products with different companies all around our area.

LAMPHEAR: I want to thank you for all that you have done. I am just looking at some of the products, going, our municipalities would be buying these, and you know when you put down here, last in the Adirondack weather. So, my community, we would be purchasing, so it's like a double win, so thank you.

HUGHES: Davina, I like a lot of this, I really do, I applaud your efforts to think outside the box, I think that's where big ideas tend to happen. I want understand your vision a little bit better. How do you, what do you do with things like, what do you think we would be doing with things like greasy pizza boxes?

THURSTON: Well, out factory needs fodder. Our factory needs things to burn for energy to produce.

HUGHES: So, part of your vision is to create a factory that would incinerate?

THURSTON: Yes

HUGHES: Okay

THURSTON: Yes, yes, yes. So, instead of having a mountain of trash, because there is certainly a lot of waste, like that pizza box that you can't recycle them.

HUGHES: Right, I am trying to think of the non-recyclable things that I throw away.

THURSTON: Sure

HUGHES: Like the yogurt containers.

THURSTON: Right, but maybe that yogurt container is a key component in the plastics, I'm not a scientist.

HUGHES: Of course

THURSTON: So, I don't know exactly how this would work, but certainly I think a huge part of this is the Adirondack brand, right? So, people, our people could get really excited about the fact that, hey, we don't have to separate anything anymore, they want everything plastic. Every plastic goes in the bin, and it gets melted down and turn into whatever. I think that is huge, you know, and I think I will email the entire report to everyone. I had to scan it in two sections because it was too big for my scanner. I don't have all the answers.

HUGHES: That's okay

THURSTON: But I really, I have the vision of what it could be, and I do think we could get a lot of support financially for this and I think, you know, Essex County can be a leader, and we can lead the way for the entire United States to stop burying trash.

HUGHES: I think the good news is that this model is already working, what you presented here.

THURSTON: Yes

HUGHES: I would love to know more about your vision for the environmental side when it comes to the incineration, when it comes to that, you used the word factory, and I also hesitate to use the word factory, but what does that look like? What does that feel like?

THURSTON: Sure

HUGHES: I would be interested in learning more about that.

THURSTON: Absolutely

HUGHES: Because that's a huge component for me.

THURSTON: Yes, and the scientific part of it with new smokestacks, and they different scrubbers. So, I have been reading a lot, and of course it's very technical, but you can clean that air emission so that it's not toxic, and I mentioned that many times in this report, that we would never want to do anything that would be detrimental to the environment, you know the complete opposite of that is true. So, I just wanted to give you the end, this is exciting to me. I think I would love to see everyone in the United States be able to buy one of these benches or picnic tables from Essex County waste. But certainly, I think a lot of your questions might be answered in my report that I will email to everyone. Absolutely, I don't have all the answers.

HUGHES: That's okay

THURSTON: But I do think we can get there if we have the will. That's the what I want from you guys, I want the will. I have it.

REUSSER: Is Mr. Mascarenas…

THURSTON: He's all in.

REUSSER: And Mr. Dougan, managing this?

THURSTON: Well, I don't know if they're managing it, yet. I don't know if they signed on all the way.

MASCARENAS: I've read it, and I think the report is a very good start in terms of what your vision is. I've worked with you an awful long time, so I absolutely understand when you get excited about something, you're going after it, and there's nothing going to stop you.
There's a lot of things to consider. I think for me the idea is phenomenal. My opinion of not allowing the State to walk away from their responsibility still exists, and while I am willing to do whatever legwork to do to make that happen, I think the responsibility of trash being placed on 36,000 people is still wrong when we're promoted by State agencies to come visit and develop all that trash. So, I think when we can come up with an argument that will require the State to step in and pay their fair share that will get somewhere.
The glass crusher is absolutely a really good example of that. We don't celebrate those things enough when we come up with solutions. That was a big issue. I think there's a lot more that we could do rather quickly that doesn't take years, and requires us to build a factory right away, but I think with the tire issue is an issue in every town. I hear it from all of you. Food, there is a lot of weight that goes into the trash in terms of food. I do think there's better ways to deal with that. Now, on the flip side, we've got to realize that when we remove that weight from the trash that we're probably increasing tax dollars to individuals, because we've got a system based on weight. So, replacing that system in its entirety by removing a large component from the trash is going to take some thought, without again, placing the ownest to pay on 36,000 people who are going to make up for it on their property tax by removing a product from those things.
So, yeah, there's lots of things to consider. I am absolutely happy to go through this report and work with Davina on further vetting out some short term goals and long term goals and how we get there on a plan of action of what we need to do to get to that vision where we have those awesome products at the end.

THURSTON: My vision, also, just so you know relies heavily on grant funds from New York State, so help us help you is what I want to say to them, and so I think we could really get support for this if we can work out all the nuts and bolts of it.

WILSON: Davina, thank you for the energy, and the vision, but what I think you just said ties into what Jim wants to talk about with the solid waste in general, which is let's pitch Essex County as a place that the State can team up with to come up with solutions and learn and have pilot programs. Whether it's road salt reduction or you know, solid waste, food waste, but let's continue to think of ways that we can be a valuable partner that the State wants to fund and work with our projects, and I think we come out much better off with that.

BARBER: I just want to make, Davina, thank you for all of your work, and I am totally in support of it, and looking at this, I also question the compact station. In fact, I am bringing it up at this meeting, because we're not being sustainable at the cost that we're at, and of course, me being a Supervisor, the last thing I want to do is raise the price of something along with everything else. I guess our big question is, we're sitting here, wondering, okay, what do we do with all the plastic stuff because I only collect #2 plastic and I've always wondered, and I know someone of you are allowed to take clear plastic because you have the containers to do it, which I do not, but I always wonder about the materials, the #5 plastic, all the other numbers that are not being recycled on. We're bringing them, and you know you're garbage cans, I purchase those, and they're quite expensive, and I purchase them for the durability of them because other trash cans that I've had at my parks, and stuff are being destroyed, and these are much heavy duty material and they last a lot longer, so I am spending the extra money, so I guess that's what we're all wondering. What do we do with all these plastics and to do the research to find out where we can dispose of the #5 plastics and etc., along with the metal. I do have Moore's Recycling for metal in my town. Which if you go by there is a whole field of metal recycling that they do there, very good work.

WILSON: Alright, so we're going to talk about our progress with the State on our solid waste management plan.

DOUGAN: Exactly what Davina's offering up is really what the State wants out of us, and so the first part, talking about solid waste is going to be our response to DEC on our local solid waste management plan that we did submit. They gave us back 25 comments that were really one size fits all look at State regulations and telling us that we don't, our plan didn't meet their regulations, but they would forget that they took landfills away from us 20-25 years ago. So, the last time we had Environmental Health Committee we said we were going draft a letter to go back to them. We didn't have a meeting in June, so I have a letter drafted. I am just going to read it to you and make sure everyone's kind of okay with that. I probably should have printed copies to everyone, but. We're sending this to the Director of the Solid Division of DEC.

Thank you for your department's continued review of the Essex County Local Solid Waste Management Plan. As the County, we have reviewed the comments provided, two general themes have emerged that we believe warrant further discussion. First; most of the comments appear to apply in a more generalized or statewide perspective, rather than the localized approach contemplated under the requirement 4 of the local solid waste management plan. Essex County's system operates under a unique combination of circumstances, including Adirondack Park land use restraints, mandatory long distance waste export, low population density, and significant seasonal population fluctuations. We believe these factors are critical to evaluating the feasibility and appropriateness of various programmatic expectations.

Second; the County believes that additional discussion would be beneficial regarding the practical limitations that rural geography and socioeconomic conditions place on participation, infrastructure viability, and programming limitations. Many of the County's planning decisions were not based only on environmental goals, but also on realistic participation and expectations, fiscal sustainability and long term operational feasibility. The department has indicated, both with its comments and through public statement by Commissioner Amanda Lefton, that Essex County should pursue alternative solutions. The County welcomes that discussion and looks forward to

meeting with department staff to better understand what cost effective, locally focused alternatives that the department believes are achievable within Essex County's unique circumstances. This discussion should also include recognition that certain state land use and policy decisions have eliminated or significantly limited options that may be available to other planning units throughout New York State.
Given these concerns; Essex County appreciates the department's recent offer to meet with County staff to discuss the plan and associated comments and would welcome that opportunity. We believe a direct discussion would be beneficial to ensure the County's plan is evaluated within the proper local context and help identify practical and achievable paths forward that align with both State objectives and local realities.
Please let us know your availability in the coming weeks. Thank you for your continued consideration.
So, Richard Clarkson is the Director of Solid Waste Management Division, somebody that Mike talked with who actually did get that first $300,000 moving forward and he actually, in a phone conversation with me, offered to come meet with us. He did that just before sending these comments. I think he, sending the comments I think he realized that we were probably put our foot down and say, we didn't really care for those comments. So, I just want to make sure that you're all okay with sending a letter like that out and actually asking to have that meeting with them, here, with them face to face.

WILSON: Any objections?

HUGHES: It's not an objection. I like the letter a lot, I might consider striking that second paragraph, about socioeconomic conditions, because it just sounds like were crying poor and I don't know if that's necessarily anything that's going to move the ball forward. I think we have to use their own decisions, I won't say against them. But they put us in this position. The fact that we have socioeconomic conditions, well, every county has got socioeconomic conditions. So, I like the tone and tenor of the vast majority, respectfully, of that entire letter, I think it hits the head on the nail, but I just don't know if we need to go into the socioeconomic aspects, because name me a county that's not going to extol their socioeconomic issues to try and convince the State. I think the State is going to be like, nope, whatever. That's just my opinion.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, I don't think you are wrong, I think it depends on what you're looking at. Maybe there's a way to reword it. It's less about socioeconomic conditions but the economics of the situation are relevant because of the 4 million visitors that come here every year that are promoted by New York State and we're putting on the back of 36,000. So, regardless of what those individuals earn is irrelevant, it's the unfairness of the burden that matters.

HUGHES: I like that angle, a lot.

MASCARENAS: Right, I think that's probably what we need to be able to say.

HUGHES: We think about ORDA, we think about Lake Placid, we think about all these State associations, organizations that are promoting, promoting, promoting it get people up in this area,

right and then they're not supporting once they're here and that's what we're talking about. We want them to support what they're creating and it's not happening the way it needs to happen.

THURSTON: Help us help you.

HUGHES: Help us help you, right? Don't leave us out to dry and I so, I hope you get that meeting and if it's Mr. Clarkson, make sure you wear your Clarkson hat when you go to that meeting, he's the wheel; right? But, extolling the socioeconomic status of Essex County, I don't think that gains us anything, but I do agree with you, sir. That it's the burden and the economics of the situation that is unfair to us as a County, unfair to our taxpayers, and that they need to do better and we're going to work with them to do better. It's a partnership, it's a shared service, but they've got to step into that as well. Those are just my points.

REUSSER: It's a we thing.

WOOD: I get exactly what you're saying, and I do like how you're putting it. I think we should stress that this is an infrastructure need that is equal to electricity, water, sewer, across the board, it's part of that whole thing. It's not an extra, it's part of our infrastructure.

WILSON: And we're the frontline Sewards of the Adirondack Park here and we're open, I mean on Saturday morning up at the Garden Parking Lot, where we don't have trash cans, because we're on State land and we practice leave no trace and he's handing me his coffee cups and saying will you throw these away for me and that happens every time I'm up there and you know, we're protecting the State's investment on the backs of our taxpayers. So, we'll work on rephrasing that.

DOUGAN: Just for similar to where Clayton just was, regarding not increasing his fees, he's cognizant of that. When I wrote socioeconomic, that is some of what I was thinking and I was thinking about, if he raises his fees, some of that garbage ends up on one of our back roads. So, that's where, but we'll rewrite it. But they need to understand that that's what happens here. Our whole system is based upon tonnage. The more tonnage we have, the more cost effective it. Start pulling the tonnage out and the price per ton to handle it goes up and they need to be cognizant of it. They are so oblivious to that in what their statewide CRR whatever the number is requirements, that they're actually pushing it to be dumped on the side of a backroad and we've got a lot more backroads than some of the counties that they're sending the same amount and so what comes out of the letter, if you have a meeting, is an agenda that this group, I hope helps me create. What do we want to push? At the same time that you've got a nice idea, they want us to have all those ideas, they do. I think it's their job to come up with some of these ideas to help us a little bit. They're got a lot bigger experts than we do, but their response to almost everything is, you tell us what you think you want to do and then we'll tell you how you do it or not. Just found a new site that's going to save Willsboro half a million dollars, but they're going to come in and find wetlands that are never coming back. So, same kind of situation.
So, we agree, we get a letter out and maybe modify this one some.

WILSON: And see what kind of response we get and ideally it would be a date to meet.

DOUGAN: I did get responses back from our consultant and I will email those out to everybody. I kind of categorized them and when I sent them out, you'll see I color coded it like I do at budget time. About ½ of the comments are B&L think are easy for us to answer and don't put us in a lot more administrative work, but then the other half are the ones that we should really talk about.

WILSON: Any more questions for Jim about the report.

HUGHES: Just a very quick sidebar, we just raised our transfer station ticket prices from .14¢ and pound to .16¢ a pound and we had no problem at all.

WOOD: That's dirt cheap.

HUGHES: Very transparent about the process, the reasons why, we did the whole data thing, we went back 7 years, 6 years, 8 years, something like that and not an issue at all. So, if you feel like you're not solvent, don't be afraid to get yourself to solvency because it worked for us in Essex and I am very happy with it.

WOOD: Just a quick question; does the County have a library of photographs of backroads with TVs sticking out of the ground?

DOUGAN: I've got some.

WOOD: Include a few of those and tell them how many miles of backroads that we have. It's just a smart aleck remark.

BARBER: We can get you those pictures, that's for sure.

WILSON: Meg, I am actually in the middle of another investigation into illegal dumping. We're really aggressive about it in Keene.

BARBER: Yeah

WILSON: Calling DEC and rummaging through trash and getting IDs out of it.

WOOD: We're doing pretty well, ourselves. But we're .25¢ a pound and have been for a few years and you know what? If we did, like what we're going to do with our golf course, figure out what it really cost to run without losing money…

HUGHES: I do have a smaller station, so I do recognize that.

WOOD: We're a County Transfer Station.

HUGHES: Right, yes.

MASCARENAS: Right, and the cost you don't see if my cost.

WOOD: Oh, yeah, right

MASCARENAS: So, I am budgeting an additional million dollars a year in terms of the equipment and all of that. That's the difference, so we're a million to the bad in terms of solvency.

THURSTON: And the recycling, you know, we don't charge anyone for the tonnage on the recycling.

MASCARENAS: But you guys are our client. So, if we were to raise our fee to you, you would then you're going to have to turn around and raise your fee.

BARBER: Something that we did in Chesterfield, we opened up the food compost, we went to River Valley, and I didn't put a charge to that, so that's going to be my combat this time. We took the food out of the trash, made your trash lighter, so it doesn't cost you as much to get rid of it, but yet we still get charged.

REUSSER: There's a couple of things that come out of that though, and that is it does change people's behaviors. If it's costing them more, yes, you're going to have to keep going to the dump, but that's why there's game cams and the favorite dumping spots can get monitored and you can take it that route, which gets around that and that changes the behaviors.

WILSON: To start, Jim, do you want to cover a couple more points here before we wrap up?

DOUGAN: They're pretty much spelled out there. We talked about A, we talked about B. The State, you know we did have the $300,000. I forget where it was Mike, was it in DEC, again?

MASCARENAS: No, it was moved.

DOUGAN: Which was nice. It was moved out of DEC, which was good.
Item D; Joe Pete, maybe you want to talk about that.

WILSON: Yeah, so this is related to the Adirondack Council approach. Steve, Jim, myself, about the issue of solid waste and what it costs and the potential of a negative impact on the environment, here in the Park and they made this funding for Essex and Hamilton counties one of their top 5 legislative priorities this year and had their lobbyists and their members pushing to solve like the payments and how it's budgeted and I think that their interest in partnering with us in trying to represent these issues is they're recognizing the role that the residents and local government take in really the frontline protection of the environment here. So, they're looking at this as a community issue, environmental issue and I think it's going to be valuable for us to work with partners like that or the State with the ideas that you have. So, I just want people to be aware

that this issue is attracting attention in ways that normally we wouldn't have partners, but part is because of the way we're positioning ourselves, that we want to solve this, we want to continue to protect the environment and so our interests in this, in this case the Adirondack Council's interest line up and it's to the good of all of us. So, I think this mindset we're starting to use is paying some rewards.
Back to you on the last one?

DOUGAN: You're the one that found that book, you invited me to that.

WILSON: Okay, so did you distribute it yet, I can't remember?

DOUGAN: We sent an email.

WILSON: So that book from when we were all small children, points out that these, it was commissioned by the first Governor Cuomo to study the issues in the Adirondack Park and solid waste was right there and I think reading that helped shaped the idea that Jim and I have been kicking around of you know, the responsibility, the State bares some responsibility for supporting the work we do, since the State owns a good chuck of our towns, our county and we're doing this work. So, look through that, there are interesting things that echo really clearly. It talks about housing, solid waste, demographics, all the things we're…

DOUGAN: How about roads? It talks about additional funding just for our roads. I mean there are a lot of things that we talked about today that they identify in a report that they, the Governor commissioned, that we talked about today, that they identified here in the Adirondack Park, that the State of New York needs to fund. To me it's a recognition that they put certain land use controls in play that don't give us the opportunity to compete with additional residents to share the burden, they identified that. They identified that, they, the State needs to fund some of that, if there's going to continue to have this Adirondack experiment that we all are living. They can't expect us to pay all of it. That's some of the things that I read out of this book. And they talked about housing, way back then. So, I just think from a legislative approach in dealing with them that you may want to remind them, you said it yourself, 36 years and nothing's really changed.

WILSON: So, Matt Brassard and I, in AATV have been talking a little bit about AATV's legislative agenda and one thing that I would like us to draft in anticipation of next year is a legislative agenda that has some items from this committee and having our own floating up from our committees, having a legislative agenda with some real concrete asks and I think we're moving towards some of that and Matt and I are going to talk again to start trying to formulate what those might be and how we might use a legislative agenda to affect change at a State level to help us with all this stuff. So, in closing I'll saying that's why having this discussion, reading that book, coming up with these ideas, is important because I think we need to channel this work and thinking into more time down in Albany and with some real concrete, well-though out asks that integrate with the issues we're trying to address. So, keep that in mind and we're going to get together and sort of start kicking some of that around and we'll keep bringing it back to this committee. I am going to encourage other committees to develop some legislative agenda items, as well.

So, and the last thing I want to say is, thank you for everyone who stayed for this very non-glamourous committee. We're not making any headlines here, but this is really important stuff, and it affects our, you know, every town's budget, the County's budget, our residents, our visitors, our economy, all of that. So, it's not glamourous, but I appreciate such a turnout and so much participation. Thank you very much and we'll adjourn at noon.

AS THERE WAS NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH TASK FORCE, IT WAS ADJOURNED AT 12:00 PM

Respectively Submitted,

Dina Garvey, Deputy Clerk
Board of Supervisors