

## Southbridge MA Residents Warn Bethlehem About Casella

**Commercial landfills are a dirty business.** Southbridge, MA, where I live, signed a contract with the Casella over ten years ago to develop a large scale commercial landfill on town-owned property.

Casella's siren song was bought by a small minority in our town who unfortunately controlled the Town Council. They promised a golden ticket, with no tax increases and free trash pick up in exchange for collecting revenue based on Casella's dumpage.

**It did not take long for a harsh reality to set in: there is no free lunch.** Residents were bombarded with noise and odor pollution produced by the site.

**Independent monitors showed that the landfill was leaking toxins** (Arsenic, Chlorobenzene, 1,4 Dioxane, Trichloroethene and many more) into surrounding wetlands. **Neighboring homes had their wells contaminated. The Casella-promised fool proof landfill technology didn't work.**

And no one could ever explain how much methane was being released into the air.

Casella filled up the authorized landfill twice as fast as promised by bringing in garbage from other communities. They proposed to vastly expand the landfill footprint to gobble up additional town land, including our municipal airport. Casella engineered a Town referendum on their expansion plan to build a mega-dump.

**The community was torn with arguments over the wisdom of the Casella dump.** Casella spent over \$100,000 blanketing our town with propaganda, mailers and ads. The citizens fighting expansion only spent \$8,000. Despite being out-spent more than 10-1, Southbridge citizens voted against Casella's plan by a margin of 60% to 40%. Having filled its authorized landfill space, and denied expansion, Casella is leaving Town.

On its way out the door, the Casella notified Town officials that it wants to cancel its contract with the Town of Southbridge for reasons of "force majeure." That

contract includes Casella's obligation to provide free pick up of garbage and refuse through 2027. So much for their promises. We are still fighting on this issue.

**Bethlehem, save yourselves 20 years of trouble.** Don't get started with an expanded commercial landfill. We have recently amended our Town By-Laws to forbid the development of any commercial landfill on Town owned property without prior approval of a majority of citizens voting in a referendum.

**We're still left with contaminated wells, lawsuits and liabilities. This was from a 51-acre dump. Imagine what could happen with a 161-acre one? Don't let Casella expand. Get them out while you can.**

Mike Marketti, Southbridge, MA

"It's really frightening, because you don't know day-to-day what's coming out of your well. So you don't drink, you don't use it for cooking, you don't brush your teeth with the water...Anything you do, you have to use bottled water to run your life. **It is life altering.**"

Will Gallien, Charlton MA

“Despite Casella’s paychecks and donations, the landfill brought down the self-esteem of the entire area.

We needed to rid ourselves of this baggage to fully move forward... Those of us fighting saw the potential and knew what we could be again.

The great trash experiment has ended in failure, and I’m excited to move forward with cleaner and more progressive sources of revenue.”

Kristin Auclair, Town Councillor, Southbridge, MA

**“We can’t open our windows the entire year because of odors. You try to have a few friends over for cookouts, or during evenings, and you have to apologize to guests for why the air stinks.”**

—Dan Butler, Southbridge MA

It's About Quality of Life

John Jordan’s three-bedroom home in Charlton, MA, was once appraised to be worth \$300,000. But after the Casella landfill contaminated wells and drinking water in his neighborhood, a real estate agent recently told Mr. Jordan that his home was worth whatever a buyer was willing to pay. In other words, the realtor said, \$0.

“It wasn’t anything like that when we moved in,” says Jordan, pointing toward the landfill from his kitchen, where Poland Spring water jugs are stacked in the corner. “I never would have moved here if I knew it was going to get this big.”

John Jordan, Charlton MA

*John Jordan says he never really considered himself an environmentalist kind of guy, but when chemicals from Casella’s landfill contaminated the wells in his neighborhood, he founded the local activist group CleanWells.org.*

It's Not All About Money...

***“For us, it wasn’t about the revenue Casella generated for the town. It was about protecting the health and safety of citizens, not only in Southbridge, but in bordering towns within proximity of the landfill. Wells have already been contaminated, and we still have no idea what else could possibly rear its ugly head down the road as a result of what’s already been put there.”***

Erin Lapriore, Southbridge

**"Our town of Southbridge was promised \$150 Million** by Casella for hosting its landfill, but what we actually received was under \$36 million, and due to the groundwater contamination, we are being sued in Federal court, and it does not look very good. We are preparing to pay out far more than we ever received!

And the costs don't end there. Reduced Real Estate values also far exceed the amount provided by Casella to our town. With large-scale contaminated ground water, our home values plummeted. Would you buy a home if you couldn't drink the water?

**How is a landfill a solution if within 10-15 years, it may cost you far more than it brought in?**

ALL liners leak—Casella's own experts testified to this unfortunate fact at our landfill hearings.

Is Bethlehem prepared to take that gamble? The people of Southbridge would urge you to think long and hard before you allow expansion.

Any theories on why our town has the fastest growing asthma rate in Massachusetts? Not all hydrogen sulfide smells. Have your MS rates increased yet? Esophageal and stomach cancers? Any other cancer clusters? Just a coincidence?

**Take the money anyway, it almost always happens to someone else, right?**

**Wrong.** We hosted a Casella landfill. And we're living proof landfills come with severe consequences, far more than any amount of promised Casella money could fix."

John Pulawski, Southbridge MA