

Testimony From Bethlehem Residents On Casella

For a moment, imagine money is off the table. Would you go the distance with Casella without a payout? Without profit, would Casella be there for you?

How about your community? Would you invest your efforts here if money wasn't the reward? Would your neighbors be there to lend a hand unpaid? The answers are obvious.

I would ask my neighbors to look at their family, friends and loved ones and ask themselves: Are some things more important than money? Of course they are.

Some would have you believe that those against the expansion have deep pockets and don't worry about the tax rate. I live on a budget. The tax hike hurts. I will have to make some hard choices at the kitchen table, but I can hold onto my principles and remember why I live here.

The truth is, Casella is using taxes as a scare tactic. They hope to scare residents into voting for their 20-year and 100-acre expansion deal. But facts matter and people need to know that a large chunk of the 2017 tax increase—nearly a dollar per thousand—is caused by Casella. Because Casella filed a tax abatement, the town had to put aside \$200,000 to prepare for Casella asking for a refund.

There are ways for a town to thrive without sacrificing its true worth. We have so many unique assets to offer that a 161-acre trash pile devalues. I don't have the answers, and like anything else, obstacles will always come up. What I do know is that our greatest asset is the strength we have when we come together for a common goal.

Casella does what's good for Casella, and always will. Bethlehem must put the town first, and not sell itself short of its tremendous value. That value comes from its residents and the natural beauty of the White Mountains. Something so few places on earth have to offer. I truly believe that this is what will bring us future growth and prosperity.

In the long run, we can count on our friends and neighbors—not a self-interested, multi-million-dollar corporation—to share a vision and grow this town to its true potential. Our town is worth more than what a multi-state landfill is offering. Bethlehem will always be the real value, not the dump. You can take that to the bank."

Caleb Brooks, Bethlehem

"I recognize that Bethlehem is facing some economic issues. What many people don't realize is that the town's main currency consists of its location next to the White Mountain National Forest, its elevation, its air quality - and just as important economically, the town benefits from its image as a place of natural beauty.

We can sell that image and become "The Town with the Enormous Landfill", but it's important to understand that we aren't getting something for nothing. Instead of Bethlehem as we know it, we'll have more cash, but we'll be much less attractive to others. We can expect a hit in real estate values and tourism, and many of us will take a hit in the esteem we have for our town, - but for now we'll have a little more money.

The income won't last, however. The few jobs created by a landfill will over time net out a loss of jobs because of hits to tourism and building and future growth.

I am not willing to accept this trade, to become the town with the largest trash heap in NH, a place to shun rather than a place thousands of people are attracted to. In the long run, we will be better off financially if we support our inns and restaurants, our building and real estate industries, our recreational assets. That's where the potential is, as long as we don't undermine it.

Bethlehem has a long history, and probably a long future, but as what? Will we be as proud of our future as we are of our past? I think we could be looking at a brilliant future, or a potential disaster. Eventually Casella will go away, but the big mound on Trudeau Road will not. Do we want that to be our legacy to the people of Bethlehem forever? This should not be a hard decision.

Leslie Dreier, Bethlehem

"My heart is so filled with reasons to love Bethlehem that I have had difficulty choosing a train of thought to share. Yesterday, while speaking to an expansion supporter my focus presented itself when he brushed aside my reference to history with Casella, saying he didn't live here then.

I did.

I sat at the long table with several of the original peaceful warriors. We had been invited to sit with John Casella to express our concerns and were so hopeful to be able to strike a

balance for all. Instead, we were met by a half dozen lawyers in expensive suits, none of whom had any interest in conceding a thing. We'd been duped, again, and forced to drain the Town's coffers again to defend the laws of the Town against another loophole-lawsuit. It was so frustrating that every time we gained an inch, we lost a mile due to some loophole that our legal team (you get what you pay for and Casella's pockets are soooo deep) had missed...to have believed that there was any genuine interest in truly helping the town and working with its residents...to see promise after promise not delivered on while more and more neighbors became appeased by meager hand-out or so fed up that they moved out. That Casella is fighting the current agreement they took such pains to sell to us is unconscionable in my eyes; reason enough to give them the boot.

I am nothing if not a joyously hopeful person. In our dealings with Casella, all hope has been beaten out of me. Decades of trickery, slights-of-hand, persuasive lies, obtuse innuendos and down right bullying have set me firmly against entering any further negotiations with them. I abhor liars, cheaters and bullies. Casella has proven to be all three."

Amy Delventhal, Bethlehem

"Casella has been in town for decades, and many claim our taxes are still too high. If Casella's current contract hasn't lowered our taxes to an acceptable level, what makes anyone think they will do so in the future?"

Jamie Allore, Bethlehem

"New Hampshire has much to celebrate as the 8-year battle to protect our state's natural resources, beautiful scenery, property values, and economy from Northern Pass ends in victory.

Towns all over our state united and mobilized, successfully arguing that Northern Pass would permanently scar the face of the state, hurt the state's economy, lower home values, destroy sensitive environments, and disrupt the lives of those along the route. SEC agreed, voting unanimously to deny Northern Pass's application, saying "project developer Eversource failed to meet its burden of proof that the project would not negatively impact the orderly development of the region."

As we all celebrate our victory over NP, the landfill expansion battle rages once again in Bethlehem. There are many parallels we can draw between Northern Pass and Casella. NP spent millions lobbying for the project, using the same selling points Casella is using—tax revenue and vaguely promised monetary benefits—that don't hold up to scrutiny.

The people of New Hampshire saw through the promises and slick marketing. We knew better, and we united and fought hard. Ultimately, Northern Pass was rejected by SEC because it failed to meet its burden of proof that the project would not negatively impact the region.

So why are we not holding Casella to the same standards as we did Northern Pass?

Has Casella proven there will be no hidden costs to our environment, health, natural resources, town assets, and property values with their 161-acre landfill?

Has Casella proven that an additional 20 million tons of trash deposited into our town for the next 20 years—in the White Mountain National Forest, on the banks of The Ammonoosuc River—won't have consequences?

Has Casella met its burden of proof that its 100 acre landfill expansion is not setting up our town, our children, and grandchildren for potential economic and environmental catastrophe?

Has Casella adequately addressed ANY of the serious and profound concerns listed above?

Northern Pass showed us that citizens can stand up to big, outside corporations that attempt to use our towns for multimillion dollar profits, with little regard for the serious impacts they may have to our long-term economic success. The future of Bethlehem is in our hands. If we have ANY doubts about the risks of expansion, the only responsible vote is NO.

Teresa Wood, Bethlehem

"Bethlehem is beautiful and has an amazingly rich history. Driving into town you spot the majestic mountains and they take your breath away! Then, when you leave the town around dusk, you get the most spectacular view of the setting sun. It makes me feel grateful to live here every single day, in a place many only get to visit—and have for decades.

If we play our cards right, we can once again be that vibrant must-see town where people want to visit, stay, and raise a family. Visit the Bethlehem Heritage Society on Main Street and look into Bethlehem's incredible history. This could also be our future and it's happening already. New businesses are investing in our town—you can actually see the changes driving up route 302 to town—including two new hotels, which will bring with them people that spend money in our restaurants, shops, theatres and stores. Bretton Woods is also expanding, and a portion of that expansion lies in our town. These business are coming here because of our natural beauty and resources. We must learn from the past and build our town's future on what has always made us thrive: we are a place people want to visit and live in.

A landfill expansion threatens and erodes the very things that will make our town economically vibrant and successful now and into the future: our stunning natural resources, beauty, and desirability. We should never sell those for short-term gain at any price, especially not for an offer worse than the one we voted down in 2017. Casella's 2018 offer now also attempted to strip our voices away and put the future rights to our land in the hands of 5 members of the Select Board. I have lived in Bethlehem long enough to know that this is NOT the Bethlehem way of doing things. We like our voices heard.

Donna Brooks, Bethlehem

"People have tirelessly asked Casella to produce hard numbers to aid in sound decision making on a vote that will set the course for our town for decades. As Casella has it, the debate is based solely on speculation. The townspeople are expected to sign a long-term contract based on NO concrete substance.

Would you agree to buy a home without knowing how many bedrooms it had or if the foundation was sound, or purchase a car without knowing the make, model, year or price? At the very least, you'd want to see your potential home, or take the vehicle for a test drive first. It would also be wise to bring in professionals: have a trusted mechanic or a qualified home inspector go through things carefully before you invested in such a large, long-term purchase.

Why is purchasing a dump by the town ANY different?

Common sense tells us we'd be foolish to sign on the dotted line under the conditions put forth by Casella/Believe in Bethlehem in 2018 for expansion. With nothing but vague promises from a company that isn't even honoring its court sanctioned Settlement Agreement with us, the only sensible vote is NO."

Henry Tupaj, Amherst/Bethlehem

"As the mother of a young son, I care greatly about the future of the town he will grow up in. Bethlehem has a lot of wonderful qualities—a great school system, vibrant local community, and the natural beauty of the White Mountains.

How beautiful will our little town be when one of our main features is a giant mountain of trash?

We've already dealt with Casella for 30 years. Enough is enough.

Vote NO to any expansion to preserve our rivers, our mountains, and the future of our children, who will bear the consequences of the decisions of those who should have their best interests in mind."

Sarah Loveland, Bethlehem

"I am Bethlehem born and raised. I returned with my wife and child for the better quality of life, business opportunities, school system, and gorgeous landscape.

Bethlehem is a special town, and even considering the dump expansion is a shameful moral and environmental debasement.

Be righteous, stand up for your town and vote NO on landfill expansion.

I will not be bought for any amount of money. Period."

Nicholas Storella, Bethlehem

"I have lived in Bethlehem for 25 years, and have always opposed expansion for a many different reasons: concern about the environment, mistrust of Casella Waste Systems, concern about the impact of being a "dump town" on our property values and our town's reputation, and a desire to protect one of our town's greatest assets: its desirability as a mountain town.

Though I did not support the 2012 HCA, I was relieved that it at least meant—or so we were told—a finite and final END to the landfill. It would end the fighting, we were told, and it would mean that NCES could never again buy more property for landfilling, and that they would be all done at 61 acres. John Casella himself signed off on the agreement, which clearly says that NCES releases all claims against the Town, and will no longer challenge our zoning ordinance.

That means that we are now in the BEST position we have ever been in to just say "NO". Casella has assured us that they won't challenge us. They can't sue us again. Bethlehem has never been in this strong of a position legally. Squandering it means leaving our children to fight this same battle and relive this awful divisiveness in another 15-20 years when NCES is again running out of space."

Julie Seely, Bethlehem

"Good things are happening in Bethlehem. We are not the ghost town of decades past but a new and vibrant collage of cottage industries and entrepreneurs that are breathing new life into our town. At the base of Long Hill, the expanded Presby gas station joins Dollar General and a future Hilton Homewood Suites.

Just up the road is the newly built Arlington Hotel, the Gables and then the colorful block anchored by WREN, Cold Mountain Café and Ragamuffins. Across the street a historic marquee advertises movies and live performances at the newly expanded Colonial Theatre while LYS sells beautiful yarns. Antique shops crisscross the street while patrons grab a delicious bagel at Maia Papaya or an evening meal at Rosa's under colorful umbrellas.

Good things take time and will continue happening; Balance Bethlehem, Les Fauves donut shop, Rek-Lis Brewery and a \$15 million-dollar new gondola, mountain top restaurant, and conference center scheduled to be built at Bretton Woods on Bethlehem property.

Tourists, outdoor enthusiasts and second home owners also add significantly to our local economy, as do new, young families. We have excellent schools, a quality fire department, 24-hour police coverage, a new Public Library, Gazebo concerts, golf courses, and a town pool recently refurbished thanks to volunteers.

Leaving town, we pass the Bethlehem Elementary School circa 1932, the historic Mulburn Inn and the Maplewood Country Club all framed by the majestic White Mountains rising high above our town. This is our beautiful Bethlehem!

But then it's all downhill. Looming behind the Wayside Inn is the 61-acre NCES/Casella landfill, leaking contaminants into the Ammonoosuc River. Yet Casella wants to expand another 100 acres to fill with trash for the next 20 years! Is this what we want for Bethlehem's future and the future for all our children—a mega-dump?

We are not doomed as many naysayers would like us to think. We are headed in the right direction and we do believe in Bethlehem—just not in Casella—so when will our “no” vote finally mean no?

As many times as it takes. Casella has a court-sanctioned Settlement Agreement in place that says they must close their landfill for good once the 61-acres reaches capacity—estimated to be around 2020-2021.

Vote NO to any landfill expansion until No finally means No.”

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Menard, Bethlehem

"Bethlehem is a town with a rich history of being loved by many. My family lives here mainly for the people and the small-town atmosphere. The arts and culture are rich in Bethlehem as well, which is something that is important to us. It's a wonderful place to raise a family because of its great track record of low crime, clean air and abundant land.

We need to look to preserve everything that makes Bethlehem so special—that is our future, and we shouldn't be short-sighted when setting the course of our town for the next generations."

Kerri Harrington, Bethlehem

"Some say that those opposing landfill expansion must be rich; why else wouldn't we care that property taxes are so high?

Let me tell you...We are ALL rich. Even when we don't have two nickels to rub together...ALL of Bethlehem is rich! Rich in history, rich in compassion, rich in community...and we have an embarrassment of wealth when you look at the stunning views we sometimes take for granted.

We grew up here, built a home here, and raised our four children here. If I ever take for granted the grandeur surrounding us, one look at my husband's amazing photography brings it into focus again.

Why on earth would we risk that on a mega-dump, owned by a corporation that has repeatedly lied and broken promises? Some say what happened in Southbridge, MA (a leaking Casella landfill and water that is unsafe to drink) and so many other towns "isn't us." Well, we have a chance to ensure that it doesn't become our future by voting NO (AGAIN and AGAIN), and as many more times as we need to!

NH has voted to have no income tax, and no sales tax. This is why the expense of running a town is borne by the property owners. This is fair... No one is forced to own property, and we are saving so much by not paying income and sales taxes - we should be able to budget for property taxes. Ours are no worse now than in the past, and no worse than other towns without landfills. Nothing is worth mortgaging our children's future and saddling Bethlehem with waste from all over not only our own state, but several other states! Some things just shouldn't be for sale!

I ask you, fellow residents, to search your HEARTS before you cast your votes on any landfill expansions."

Wendy M. Whiton, Bethlehem

"The White Mountains are sacred, and it is privilege to live in their shadows. It comes with responsibility, however; the responsibility to preserve them in their current state for all of us to enjoy, and for future generations. These mountains are over 100 million years old, and no one has the short-sighted right to desecrate them.

I hope that Bethlehem voters will make the choice that honors our Mountains, our precious environment, our home, and that of our children and grandchildren, by voting against landfill expansion."

Lucy S. Golden, Franconia

"In 2003, I moved to Bethlehem from Boston to have a more quiet, peaceful, less stressful life. I was unaware of the battle with the landfill when I purchased my home. Back then, the landfill was smaller than it is today, and it seemed it was going to close at 61 acres. I wish it had.

I try to be mindful of the opposing side as I am someone with a limited budget who cares greatly about my finances. Still, I would rather pay a little more in taxes then see the dump expand.

To me, we live in a beautiful town in the White Mountains. Some things are just not worth trading for money.

I'm tired of Casella controlling our town. Tired of our neighbors thinking this is what defines us. We need to break free and we can.

When a political party or a large corporation wants to control people, what do they do? They start to scare them. Casella keeps throwing around inflated numbers to stoke fears about lost revenue that we would have had, or might have if only we give Casella another deal. But can we really bank on that? Didn't Casella sue our town to avoid paying taxes? Didn't they just file an abatement in 2018, inflating our tax rate by nearly \$1.00 per thousand? Aren't they in trouble with other towns, towns that are fighting them as we are?

If Casella was such the answer and golden ticket, wouldn't other towns be clamoring to host them? No other surrounding town is crying about lost Casella revenue. No other town sees them as a desirable revenue source. Most towns are doing just fine without a dump. So why is it that Bethlehem needs Casella so much?

It doesn't. Casella is the one who desperately needs us to dump over a million tons of garbage per year in our beautiful town for the next 20 years, to make tens of millions of dollars for themselves. Bethlehem is a cash cow for them, and they are using every tactic they can—including pitting neighbor against neighbor—to convince us that only their money will help us. But that really isn't true.

A Dump is a Dump is a Dump. To call it "state of the art" or say it's the greatest partner Bethlehem has had is not truth. It's marketing and PR to try to hide what it truly is: an atrocious, toxic eye sore that smells.

Where will Bethlehem be without the dump? The truth is, whether it's working harder to attract new businesses, budgeting or paying a bit more, we will get along just fine without Casella. All they want is a bigger dump and expansion. All we should want is better for our town. It's time we do better than hosting a mountain of trash.

I say let them cry wolf. No deal! Let it close in 2021. My guess is, we will be more than just fine without them. If I were a gambling man, I'd put all my chips on our town. Now that is truly believing in Bethlehem."

Paul D. Reuben, Bethlehem

"Allowing Casella to expand their dump in exchange for free trash pick up and a tax break is like asking your oncologist to accelerate and expand your cancer in exchange for a discount on his bill."

Dean Knapton, Littleton

"As news spread about Northern Pass being shot down in a 7-0 vote, people in Bethlehem were "giddy." That news united just about everyone in town -- people who'd lived here forever and "newcomers." It united people who complain about high taxes and those who've been described as wanting "to pay more taxes" or accused of making a fortune somewhere else and then moving here. None of those lines were drawn between residents as they celebrated 100-foot towers virtually toppling over.

As someone who has fought NP on behalf of the town for two years, there's something I don't understand. Why don't some people feel the same about Casella/NCES as they do about NP? NP equals 100-foot towers; Casella equals a 61-acre dump becoming a 161-acre mega-dump. If NP had been approved, we would be a small town sandwiched in between these monstrous bookends.

Should NP have tried to worm its way into the community by building a children's playground next to the ugly Transition Station with its barbed-wire-topped 8-foot chain link fence? Or bought athletic uniforms emblazoned with mega-towers." Casella has done similar things here and in other towns to gain a toehold in a community and then expand small dumps into mega-dumps. Maybe that's where NP went wrong.

Also NP didn't stoop to class warfare and "us against them" tactics as Casella is doing here and has done elsewhere.

I've seen a report from Toxics Action Center that studied Casella's tactics over the years in different towns, like Angelica NY where they "portrayed the local residents who opposed them as an elite environmental group that was out of touch with everyone else in town." I just saw a letter to the editor from someone supporting expansion that said opponents had a "NIMBY syndrome" and an "elitist" attitude.

Another tactic was to pit people from the town against people "from the city" who had moved to Angelica. In Kevin Roy's "We Believe" letter sent out around the holidays, he attacked a group, Growing Without Garbage, as "formed, in part, by new residents in town." Sound familiar?

I would just like to ask people, why are we letting Casella divide us and use us? The lesson I took away from NP is what a group of people can accomplish when they are UNITED and working toward a single goal. I see a town with a heck of a lot of talent whether it's home-grown or imported from elsewhere. Hey, let people come from other towns and help pay the taxes. What's wrong with that?!

There is an agreement in place Mr. Casella. Honor it. Close the landfill and get your negative messages of “us versus them” out of our heads and hearts. When people are working together and all on the same side, they feel really good. That’s my take-away from NP. That’s what I’d like to see for Bethlehem – even though I’m from somewhere else, because I’m here now. Now that the 2018 expansion articles have been voted down, I promise to immediately get going with one and all to work on replacing revenue from the landfill. I was guilty of thinking someone else was going to do it. We ALL have to do it and we can.”

Cheryl Jensen, Bethlehem

"I am not sure words can fully say how important this vote is to me. These woods, hills, valleys, mountains—and to me, MOST importantly, the Ammonoosuc River—are part of me and my family.

Just as importantly, I think of what kind of town we want to be in twenty years. A nice little town that caters to tourism with many profitable shops, cafes, restaurants, inns, hotels, etc. is the one I hope for. With all the new businesses already here and planned, we are on our way with room for growth everywhere.

A GIANT MOUNTAIN OF GARBAGE on the edge of town nixes all those possibilities. A little common sense gets us there.

I'm voting against landfill expansion however many times it takes!"

Jesse Delventhal Parker, Bethlehem

"If you were making a major decision that affected your grandchildren’s well-being 20 years into the future, would you let someone else cut the deal for you and never look at the contract?

If this decision required to you sit across the table from Wall Street lawyers expert in trickery, MBAs gleefully calculating exactly how much they’ll profit off you, and lobbyists inventing rule changes you’d never imagine, would you tell them, “Sure, whatever you come up with is fine; why delay the deal by asking to see it?” No loving grandparent would be so negligent!

Bethlehem possibly faces a momentous decision about a 20-year contract to expand the landfill to 121 football fields rising higher than the Northern Pass towers. Thankfully, the 60 people who voted to deny you any right to make your own decision about the contract failed. When Bethlehem rejected the 2017 landfill expansion, Casella could have come back with a better proposal, with better safeguards, pricing and transparency. Instead, they came back with a tax abatement threat, empty slogans, lawn signs, and a proposal to negotiate a contract in secret, with no public review or vote.

Casella is a Wall Street firm that serves its shareholders, period. They outgun Bethlehem in lawyers, MBAs, lobbyists, and money. Their profitability depends on strong-arming Bethlehem into the flimsiest deal they can snooker us into - like last year's 10-page, loopholed agreement versus other towns' 50-page agreements with savvy, forward-looking protections. No better deal is coming. No wonder they want to hide what they're doing and deny voters their rights.

I hope Casella will be leaving Bethlehem. Regardless of how YOU feel about NCES, don't let yourself get bullied into another Host Community proposal.

Voting NO to any expansion and tell Wall Street's Casella that Bethlehem's voters are smarter than they think."

Jacki Katzman, Bethlehem

"I did not grow up in the North Country. I moved here from central NJ. The clean air, clean water and beauty of the mountains are what drew me.

I came from a place known as the Pine Barrens of NJ. I am a flat land hillbilly. The Pine Barrens is a federally protected area of NJ. But when I was younger it was common practice for chemical companies to dump barrels of toxic stuff in the Pine Barrens and cover it up so no one would know until they leaked. Landfills were unlined, barges full of hospital waste were routinely dumped off the NJ coast and syringes would often be found on the beautiful beaches at the Jersey Shore.

I have witnessed firsthand the destruction of a beautiful rural community by a mega commercial landfill in NJ, breaking my heart. There were countless acts of misuse of private/public lands and waterways until the Federal Government created new regulations to protect us. We now have "superfund sites", many, still not cleaned up due to lack of resources and/or political will.

When we began looking for a place to retire, we considered North Carolina, Montana or Northern New Hampshire. But we were drawn to this place called Bethlehem and in 1995 we purchased our home becoming part time residents. The landfill was pretty small then. In hindsight, it should have been a red flag.

Naively, we believed that the permanent residents of such a beautiful area would not allow their community to be destroyed by an ever expanding landfill. I now understand that when you live in an area for a long time it is easy to take for granted what you have until it is gone.

We became full time residents in 2004. I have voted against landfill expansion ever since. We are on fixed incomes as retirees. The property tax burden in New Hampshire is unfair and challenging for all of us. We have had to make sacrifices. But quality of life is worth the trade off.

We didn't move here for some sort of artificial tax incentive in exchange for a pile of trash from the entire North East. Sadly, we are now considering selling our home if a new landfill expansion is approved. Before our property values drop and the town inherits a future "superfund site" with a toxic river running through it.

The life expectancy of a modern landfill liner is about 30 years. All landfill liners leak eventually. The oldest part of this landfill used a liner manufactured about 30 years ago.

I BELIEVE that it is in the town's best interest to NOT allow NCES to expand beyond the terms of the 2012 agreement.

I have been appalled and frankly insulted by the Casella team's bullying and disingenuous tactics to falsely squeeze this community into an economic box so voters now BELIEVE that NCES is the economic solution.

This is not their first rodeo. They have used these same tactics in other communities and the citizens of Bethlehem deserve to know what has happened elsewhere because it is happening here.

I BELIEVE IN THE GOOD PEOPLE OF BETHLEHEM to do the right thing.

I DO NOT BELIEVE in NCES and Casella. We deserve better than becoming the mega dump of New England.

Vote No to any landfill expansion. Your health and sustainable economic future may depend on it."

Lennie Fillius, Bethlehem

"Dream Big! There are great things happening in our town! There are young people moving to our area in increasing numbers and many are entrepreneurs, as highlighted by this great [article by nhpr.org](#), featuring Bethlehem's very own, Nick Storella. We have a hip new brewery coming and much much more.

There is amazing forward momentum in our community that many NH towns would be envious of.

There is hope for our town to grow and prosper and redefine itself. Don't believe everything Casella says, that we are nothing without them. Our town is so much more than they want us to believe. Let's dream big and create a town that is strong, sustainable and independent!"

Heidi Cook, Mountain Roots Farm

"I'm not rich and worry my taxes will get too high, but I'm willing to pay higher taxes while we figure things out for the future generations of this town."

Brigitte Boutin Taylor, Bethlehem

"Casella Waste and its partner, Believe in Bethlehem, are hard at work trying to convince the town to approve a warrant article that could lead to the landfill being expanded from 61 to 161 acres.

A crucial, misleading and manipulative part of the BiB messaging claims that the 2017 "go-slow" campaign betrayed voters. That campaign urged voters to reject a landfill-expansion deal pushed by Bethlehem Selectmen Martin Glavac, Richard Ubaldo, Sandy Laleme and Jerry Blanchard.

The Glavac-led board had quickly approved that expansion deal—refusing to accept public comment until after it acted. Some residents smelled a sweetheart deal that offered too little money and had too many loopholes. Even the Bethlehem Planning Board did not recommend it.

Voters not only rejected it, but they voted out Laleme and Blanchard.

At the town's deliberative meeting earlier this month BiB spokesman Jim Payette called those who favored "go slow" liars because they hadn't done anything about negotiations.

In my opinion, that not only lacks civility, it lacks facts.

I never saw anything from go-slow that promised reopening negotiations.

The town's three select board members elected last year - Mary Moritz, Linda Moore and Gabe Boisseau - never said they would reopen negotiations. All three said they would do what the town wanted.

If the town voted to reopen negotiations, they would support it.

If the town didn't want negotiations to be reopened, they would support it.

They took a neutral position, so it was not their job to reopen negotiations.

Here's what Casella and BiB don't want people to realize: Anyone could have approached the select board and asked negotiations be reopened.

Casella never asked. BiB spokesman Jim Payette didn't ask. Casella enthusiasts Ubaldo and Glavac, never suggested negotiations be reopened.

Under an RSA any 50 voters could have called a special meeting and demanded negotiations be reopened.

If Payette and BIB want to point fingers at somebody for not asking to reopen negotiations, they need to stand in front of a mirror.

Instead, they are hoping to mislead by taking advantage of trusting friends and neighbors who don't regularly attend all the select board meetings and don't know the facts.

In my opinion Casella orchestrated this plan: Don't initiate anything; stir up concern over the future of the town; form and finance a citizens' group and start screaming that there has been a betrayal of voters because nobody asked for renewed negotiations with Casella.

It's sad and it's misleading and it is not how neighbors should treat neighbors."

Christopher Jensen, Bethlehem

"Over the past 20 plus years, there has been nothing more destructive to the well-being of Bethlehem than a growing hostility toward each other over the dump and its expansion.

Political debate in New Hampshire is almost the state sport; however, the angry verbal attacks and attempted character assignments from both sides are not real and effective debate. Instead, they are infuriating, divisive and counterproductive. These decades' long battles have led to an "us versus them" mentality, separating neighbors, friends and even family—all the while changing nobody's mind. The fighting only worsens year after year after year with nothing to gain for citizens in either camp, except anger, distrust, suspicion and hurt.

There is, however, only one party who does benefit from Bethlehemites continuing to be up in arms against each other. It is not the well-meaning residents who are concerned about tax rate and it is not the well-meaning residents who are concerned about the environment.

Expanding the dump for another 20 years will sentence the town to another 20 years of destructive in-fighting. This fight will stop when the dump is closed. It is time to forgive, heal and move on.

Jane Storella, Bethlehem

"Common sense and sensibility tells me that a 161 acre mega-dump at the edge of the White Mountain National Forest, next to the Ammonoosuc River, is a bad idea.

We have an active, court sanctioned Settlement Agreement with Casella that says they must close their landfill once the current 61 acres reaches capacity, which is estimated to happen by 2021.

We were promised an end to this nightmare when we voted for a Settlement in 2012. The power lies in our hands. All Bethlehem has to do to make Casella honor the Settlement Agreement is stay strong and Vote No.

No more 'deals'. No more fighting. No more garbage. No more dump. Just NO."

Jeanne Robillard, Bethlehem
Former Chair of the Bethlehem Selectboard

"I have seen the name of Southbridge, MA in connection with Casella Waste Management - but I never fully appreciated how much The Town of Bethlehem has in common with The Town of Southbridge. A few seconds of research on the Internet revealed several news articles. The one that quickly caught my attention was in the [June 2017 Telegram & Gazette](#) (telegram.com). The article details a lawsuit filed against Casella by two environmental groups and says: "The suit alleges the Southbridge landfill has been releasing toxic pollutants to groundwater for years..."

In the overview, the state director of one of the environmental groups, said **Casella consistently employs "sneaky and aggressive strategies" to bully towns and expand their profits.** She continued, "Casella's business strategy pattern is to enter communities with an existing trash facility and expand, expand, expand, while trying to disregard local officials and concerned residents."

If this was not hard enough to read and so familiar, the comments by a resident affected by the pollution were just as meaningful: "When you think about how long this has been going on and the fact that Casella is still seeking to expand...It boggles my mind...To me, it's proof that they are willing to put profit before people."

Herein is the strongest connection between Southbridge and Bethlehem. That the Casella corporation is described in this article in ways we in Bethlehem have already experienced should be a rude awakening for anyone "on the fence" about this company and make everyone aware of their relentlessly aggressive attempts to convince us to permit them to EXPAND the NCES landfill from 61 to 161 acres, another 100 acres for a mega-dump!

The Casella corporation has some in town believing that a landfill expansion will save us from financial ruin. The fact is our property taxes have already risen – despite Casella dumping TONS of trash from multiple STATES here for YEARS!

That same [article](#) about Southbridge describes how contaminants – one a "probable human carcinogen 1,4-dioxane" – have been discovered in "drinking water aquifers and residential drinking wells." Casella denies responsibility, of course, but another article (February 2017) reported that the Mass. Dept. of Environmental Protection "named Casella as the potential responsible party and directed the company to supply bottled water or whole-house filtration systems to the affected homes."

Bethlehem has spent tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees FIGHTING Casella over the past 20 years and we continue to add legal fees to the budget because of Casella, most recently because they may file for an abatement to decrease their taxes. These legal fees increase our property taxes.

The NCES landfill is on Trudeau Road in Bethlehem, but during the day the mound of trash can easily be seen from Route 302 in both directions, and at night you can see the flame from the torch burning off the gases being released from the trash. This eye sore is a heartbreaking blemish on the beautiful backdrop of our White Mountains!

The Southbridge landfill and its history goes back to before Casella became involved, but once they were – their business model only added to the woes that face this town today – and what could very well be the future of the NCES/Casella landfill here.

We must say no to any future landfill expansions."

Nancy Dickowski, Bethlehem

"It's becoming an annual rite of spring. In February we have Valentine's Day and Groundhog Day. In March we have "Let's Vote to NOT Expand the Landfill Day."

Every year, Bethlehem neighbors are probably thinking: Oh, darn, did my NO vote last year not count? I have to vote NO again! And I have to read more of these letters! (If you're angry about any of this, just remember Casella is to blame.)

I think it might help you get through this campaign season if you change the way you think. Instead, think, "I can hardly wait to read all these letters again!" About voting in March, think, "I can't wait to vote NO again on a 20-year mega-dump expansion!"

Now, if you lived in Southbridge, MA, you wouldn't have to go through this. Last year, Casella spent \$100,000 on a campaign to expand its landfill there. (They had gotten a 20-year expansion in 2007 and only halfway through that agreement the company was asking for another one "for the maximum period of time allowed by law.") The people opposing it, spent only around \$8,000 – Southbridge is the state's 10th poorest community. Yet they won. Casella lost. Casella announced it would close the landfill there at the end of this year. Where do you think they might want to bring all that trash for the next 20 years?

Like Southbridge, Bethlehem must keep voting no until Casella finally gets the message—It won't be Groundhog Day in Bethlehem for long."

Ben Salomon, Bethlehem