



Borough of Hillsdale

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John J. Ruocco, Mayor

February 22, 2018

Dear Fellow Residents,

As a result of the decision by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (“NJDEP”) to issue a Solid Waste Facility Permit renewal to Waste Management Inc. (“WMI”), I am sorry to report that the Hillsdale waste transfer facility has now become operational. You may have noticed that garbage trucks have started to make deliveries to the Patterson Street location, albeit at a low level for the moment.

The permit renewal was issued by NJDEP on December 15, 2017 “pending the results” of a comprehensive review by the Bergen County Utilities Authority (“BCUA”) of the county’s solid waste management plan. The Hillsdale Borough Council appealed the NJDEP’s decision on January 10, 2018 and sought clarification as to what exactly “pending the results” meant. In our humble view of the English language, it meant that WMI could not resume operations until the BCUA had completed its own review, but we sought to confirm this with NJDEP. Before we could receive an answer, WMI began sending its trucks down our streets. Subsequently, NJDEP told us that this was fine in their eyes, unless BCUA ruled that the transfer station had no place in the County’s plan. Based on the latest information I have, the BCUA is not likely to complete its review until this summer.

Needless to say, the Hillsdale Mayor & Council are disappointed in this outcome and in the manner in which the NJDEP reached its decision. The Hillsdale waste transfer facility had been non-operational for almost 4 years with no demonstrated negative consequences to either WMI or the County’s Solid Waste Management Plan, and despite virtually unanimous opposition from residents. There are a host of negative environmental, safety, and financial issues associated with the NJDEP’s decision that I believe have not been adequately addressed, and we are questioning why the permit renewal application was accepted at all and the manner in which it was processed. The NJDEP’s decision also negatively impacts Hillsdale’s ability to meet our state-mandated affordable housing requirements. For all these reasons, we felt compelled to file for an adjudicatory hearing (appeal) with the NJDEP.

This week we requested the courts to issue a stay order to prevent WMI from resuming operations until the results of the BCUA’s review are known. I also raised the issue directly with Governor Murphy at a Mayors’ roundtable meeting on February 5 and was assured by him that the matter would receive his staff’s attention. Since then, I have been in regular contact with his staff and will continue to press them for action.

We will continue our efforts to convince County authorities and the BCUA that a waste transfer station in the center of Hillsdale makes little sense and contravenes guidelines established in 2002 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. We are asking for the support of State Senator Cardinale and State Assembly members Auth and Schepisi, and suggest that you contact them as well. We are also weighing other actions that can be taken to prevent downtown Hillsdale from becoming a destination for garbage trucks and a victim of high-powered corporate lobbying.

On behalf of the Borough Council, I want to thank you for your continued support in this effort, and I promise to keep you informed of any significant developments.

Mayor John J. Ruocco

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