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Dear Members of the Schuyler County Legislature,

In lieu of attending tonight's Legislature meeting in person due to restrictions on the number of people gathering and additional Covid precautions, Seneca Lake Guardian requests that this statement be shared with all legislators and entered into tonight's minutes for the Public Comment portion of the meeting.

Seneca Lake Guardian (SLG), a Waterkeeper Affiliate, is an organization dedicated to preserving and protecting the health of the Finger Lakes, its residents and visitors, its rural community character, and its agricultural and tourist related businesses through public education, citizen participation, engagement with decision makers, and networking with like-minded organizations. We represent nearly 500 regional businesses and hundreds of thousands of Finger Lakes residents who strive to protect and preserve the Finger Lakes region's clean air, water, and soil for generations to come.

In a 2019 letter to Governor Cuomo, SLG wrote, "While we recognize that prohibiting the construction of new garbage incinerators in the Finger Lakes, or anywhere else in the state is vital, we recognize that we need to work harder throughout the state to achieve a zero waste economy. Seneca Lake Guardian and our community partners would like to work closely with your administration on policies to reduce waste, particularly plastic pollution. We need to improve both local and state recycling programs, along with composting projects. The agriculture sector especially lends itself to supporting composting, where we can improve soil health, reduce methane emissions from landfills and serve as a carbon sink - an important climate change strategy."

With Schuyler County having a robust recycling program and knowing that the Comprehensive Plan stresses the value and conservation of agricultural land as its highest economic priority, and with a further emphasis on reducing the production and handling of solid waste within the county, we believed that SLG's and the County's missions were in sync.

We applaud your consideration in support of a resolution opposing the application for a proposed MRF and Solid Waste Transfer Station in the Town of Cayuta, and your request for a full Environmental Review by DEC. We urge you to approve that Resolution at tonight's meeting.

However, we also implore you to adopt a moratorium on the construction of any new waste related projects in Schuyler County- it is an option that has been laid out as legally possible by County attorney Getman- and one which SLG fully supports.



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Construction of an MRF and Waste Transfer station in Cayuta makes no economic sense. First, the recycling operations in neighboring counties are experiencing marked declines in revenue as global markets for recycling become more and more challenging. We are unclear how this new facility would be profitable as it is currently being proposed. Further, the project would have long term negative impacts on neighboring property values and consequently the tax base in a Town that is already economically struggling. New investors will choose to purchase property elsewhere and more sustainable investors will do the same. This negative economic impact will have residual impacts on the county overall, as increased truck traffic on already busy and historically dangerous roads are utilized to transport garbage using up to 185 vehicles per day.

The proposal does nothing to move the County away from a “throw away society”, where the need for more and more landfill space is required. It merely prolongs the problem and offers no solutions in moving toward a Zero Waste economy. Rather, SLG would welcome the opportunity to engage with the County and its residents in creating a Zero Waste economy that would offer cleaner jobs, be better for the environment, and reduce the need for landfills in a win- win approach for all.

The project site is less than a mile from the Connecticut Hill Wildlife Management Area, and within a few more miles of the Newfield State Forest- both recreation and hunting areas that have experienced a significant uptick in use during Covid-19, as people seek safe, outdoor spaces. Any project that would negatively impact that opportunity with noise, odor and light pollution during this unprecedented time would add further insult to our county’s already painful injury as it relates to Covid.

The proposed trash truck route, as stated in the application on file and yet to be amended by the applicant, has trucks traveling to Seneca Meadows Landfill in Waterloo. We must evaluate the proposal based on what is written in the documents, and not the applicant’s word. This route would negatively impact the communities of Alpine Junction, Odessa, Mecklenburg, Trumansburg, Covert, Interlaken, Ovid, Varick, Romulus, Fayette, Seneca Falls; and alternate routes could impact Montour Falls, Watkins Glen, Hector, Valois, Lodi, and points north or, the communities on the west side of Seneca Lake. How will this impact residents, state parks, wineries, restaurants, and agriculture in the region? If officially amended, a new truck route and traffic study would have to be analyzed and reviewed by the public- but if permitted, it would be difficult to enforce.

The applicant has constructed part of the facility and excavated the land – which has Nationally Protected Wetlands, a stream, and sits atop a primary aquifer- without any construction or storm water permit from DEC. This is in violation of NYDEC Part 360 regulations as well as a Clean Water



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violation, and does not provide any confidence that the applicant will follow other laws if permitted to complete his facility. Regardless of whether or not the applicant has been able to convince DEC that this construction was not related to the Waste Facility project in an effort to avoid fines, the applicant's intent for that site has been clearly documented in the minutes of the Cayuta Town Board since 2018, and demonstrates that the applicant will not be a reliable actor in following other regulations if the facility is permitted to be completed.

Alternative Waste Services has murky connections to Casella Inc.- another waste corporation with a horrendous history of violations. Casella is a "vertically integrated" corporation that frequently works with smaller companies to get their foot in the door, with plans to buy them out and expand in the future. The applicant has already been involved with Casella in past dealings such as this, and it is worth considering that since the applicant is moving to Tennessee, this may be the plan for the new facility as well.

The applicant is a savvy business man with 40 years in the garbage industry and a history of violating regulations, and while it is difficult to speculate, we worry that the real plan is to make way for a new landfill that can accept the 6,000 tons of waste per day that is currently going to Seneca Meadows Landfill, and which is slated to close in 2025.

The Finger Lakes currently accepts over 50% of all of New York state's waste, and constituents feel as though we are already doing our part.

We hope that you share our goal of reducing this problem by working with us on producing less plastic and moving toward a zero waste economy, rather than permitting another waste processing and transfer station in the Finger Lakes that would merely encourage the existing flawed waste system and keep landfills growing- and that which we seek to transform.

We strongly urge you to do everything in your power to not only pass the resolution regarding this project before you tonight, but to also adopt a moratorium on any new waste related facilities in the county while the public has the opportunity to learn more about the proposal at hand and to seek alternatives and more appropriate solutions to our solid waste problem.

Sincerely,

Joseph Campbell, President Seneca Lake Guardian

Yvonne Taylor Vice President Seneca Lake Guardian