

<https://www.mcall.com/business/mc-biz-slate-belt-grand-central-landfill-expansion-20200312-7zk56ajlcvbhjkeaxku2x2ndy-story.html>

As landfill, township begin long expansion process, Slate Belt residents plead an end to taking 'everyone else's garbage'

By ANTHONY SALAMONE

THE MORNING CALL |

MAR 11, 2020 AT 11:22 PM



Workers on large equipment move trash at the Grand Central Landfill in Plainfield Township last month. The landfill's owner, Waste Management Inc., formally presented its plans Wednesday night to township supervisors regarding a major expansion. (Amy Shortell/The Morning Call)

The owners of the Grand Central Landfill formally presented their nearly 900-page expansion proposal Wednesday night to Plainfield Township supervisors, but many among the more than 50 people who attended urged supervisors to stop the project.

“I think the board should reject this,” Pen Argyl resident Tom Carlo said. “In 20 years they will buy another farm to expand again.

“We should start looking out for our community.”

Grand Central, which is owned by corporate giant Waste Management Inc., wants 211 acres zoned farm and forest to be designated solid waste processing and disposal. It is part of an overall plan to purchase 325 acres bordering Pen Argyl and Delabole roads.

Of the 325 acres, 81 acres would be designated for trash disposal. The company also proposes to dedicate 192 acres for wooded and wetland areas, and 52 acres for a buffer zone, access roads and other “support activities.”

Grand Central estimates spending \$42.3 million in initial costs for the expansion. The expansion would extend Grand Central’s operating life about 20 years, according to the company.

For about one hour, speakers at the meeting complained that expanding the landfill as the company proposes, along Pen Argyl and Delabole roads, would lead to decreased property values and bring additional noise and odors.

At least two lawsuits filed last year against Grand Central because of excessive odors remain in Northampton County Court.

[Second lawsuit alleges 'offensive odors' at Plainfield Township landfill »](#)

“If the proposed plan is approved, riding on Pen Argyl Road will be riding through a giant, smelly butt crack,” township resident Don Moore said.

The board did not vote, with its attorney, David Backenstoe, saying the supervisors would take the information “under advisement” and pledging to keep residents informed.

Supervisor Jane Mellert said the board will carefully review the application. “It’s not a couple-of-minutes-read by any means,” she said.



Scott Perin, Waste Management Inc. (CHRIS SHIPLEY / THE MORNING CALL)

Scott Perin, Waste Management's area director of disposal operations, said Grand Central cannot apply for an expansion permit from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection until it has less than five years of capacity left. The landfill has less than eight years of operating life.

"We're here because we anticipate it will take some time to get through the zoning process," Perin said, adding the company also sought to pursue early approval "out of respect for the township and citizens."

But residents were skeptical and urged the township not to accept the expansion.

"It's time that elected officials get the message that people in the Slate Belt are finished with taking everyone else's garbage," Pen Argyl resident John Reinhart said.

Since Grand Central first announced the plans last month, opponents such as [Sludge Free Slate Belt](#) have taken to social media against the expansion, including an online petition.

Publicly held Waste Management, which posted 2019 net income of nearly \$1.7 billion, or \$3.93 per share, off revenue of nearly \$15.5 billion, acquired Grand Central about 20 years ago. Based in Houston, it operates 293 active landfills.

Grand Central, which has been in existence for more than 70 years, is one of three landfills in Northampton County; Chrin in Williams Township and IESI in Lower Saucon Township are the others. There are no landfills in Lehigh County.

Northampton County does not anticipate taking a stance on the expansion, said Serena Davis, its environmental services coordinator. That's in part because it has no conservation easements that would be affected under Grand Central's proposal.

The expansion will also need a recommendation from the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission.

Morning Call reporter Anthony Salamone can be reached at 610-820-6694 or asalamone@mcalls.com.

More information is also available at grandcentrallandfill.com; Facebook page: [facebook.com/Grandcentrallandfillandhauling](https://www.facebook.com/Grandcentrallandfillandhauling); or by calling 888-373-2917.

Anthony Salamone

CONTACT

Anthony Salamone joined The Morning Call in September 2014. He has been a journalist for more than four decades. You can reach him at 610-820-6694.

Plainfield residents say landfill expansion plan disrespects Slate Belt

- [Jeff Ward, Lehigh Valley Regional News](#)
- Mar 11, 2020 Updated Mar 13, 2020



PLAINFIELD TWP., Pa. – Grand Central Landfill's proposed expansion shows disrespect for the Slate Belt and could lead to more additions in the future, residents said Wednesday.

"People in the Slate Belt are finished with accepting everyone else's garbage," John Reinhart, Pen Argyl resident and former superintendent of the Easton Area School District, told Plainfield Township supervisors. "Stop. It's over."

"There is no doubt that they think of us as a bunch of backwoods simpletons," Thomas Bondurich said referring to Waste Management Inc., the Houston-based owner of Grand Central.

The supervisors met at the Plainfield Township Volunteer Fire Company's banquet hall at 6480 Sullivan Trail because they expected a crowd. Close to 100 people showed up.

Grand Central presented plans to the supervisors to acquire about 325 acres across Pen Argyl Road from the current landfill for expansion. About 81 acres, or a quarter of the site, would be used as a landfill, with the rest set aside for related activities, protected woodlands and wetlands, and a buffer zone.

The proposal would require a change in the township's zoning ordinance, and add an estimated 20 years to the useful life of the landfill. Without the expansion, the landfill will be full in about eight years.

"We need to start moving on from bringing in dumps," Tom Carlo of Pen Argyl said.

Property values will suffer and businesses will not locate in an area known for landfills, he said. As for Waste Management, "I don't trust them."

Leonard Zito, a retired Northampton County senior judge, presented Grand Central's plan in about five minutes. Then more than a dozen residents spoke, all in opposition, for about an hour. The Plainfield supervisors listened but took no action.

"Finish out their time and that's it," said Robert Osborne, who estimated that his home has lost 40% of its value because it's near Grand Central. "Enough is enough."

"Save the air, spare the people," said Stephen Bondurich, a Penn State student and Pen Argyl resident. He and others complained about smells, noise and truck traffic from Grand Central.

"Whose best interests are we going to go with, the company's or the citizens'?" Luther Bond of Pen Argyl asked.

"It's already a terrible landfill," Pat Sutter of Wind Gap said.

Several residents raised the specter of Synagro Technologies Inc.'s plan to bring processed sewage sludge to the landfill. Don Moore of Plainfield said rejecting the zoning request could make it harder for the controversial sludge plan to be revived; the proposal was rejected by the township earlier.

The plan to bring sludge into the township showed extreme disrespect for the Slate Belt, Reinhart said. *(Note added – Modern Landfill takes sludge now)*

"We spent three years fighting Synagro," Justin Huratiak said, and now, a battle looms over the expansion.

Adrienne Fors, spokeswoman for Grand Central, said after the meeting that the Synagro plan is dead, and no similar proposal will be made for the site. Fors said some of the comments made at the meeting were not accurate, and Grand Central will hold meetings for the public to ask questions.

The first Grand Central session will be at 6 p.m. Wednesday at the banquet hall on Sullivan Trail. The company is posting information on its [website](#).

Scott Perin, Waste Management's area director and a member of the family that started the landfill in the 1950s, said the company is starting the expansion request early, eight years before the current site is due to be full, because getting approval at the local and state levels is a long process.

"We respect the process and respect the input of the citizens," Perin said.

Grand Central's presentation included maps of the proposed expansion, along with projections of more jobs, millions in tax revenue and the preservation of more than 300 acres in open space.

Township Manager Thomas Petrucci said last year, Plainfield's general fund received \$616,898 from Grand Central and the capital improvements fund, which pays for roads and vehicles, received just over \$1 million. Grand Central pays taxes and a host fee, and Plainfield, Wind Gap and Pen Argyl receive "tipping fees" based on the volume of waste.

Plainfield solicitor David Backenstoe declined to estimate how much time the supervisors will need before making a decision, but he said it will not be a quick process.

Supervisor Stephen Hurni said he will not participate in discussion or votes. He is involved with the Green Knight Economic Development Corp., a non-profit group that generates electricity from methane gas collected at the landfill and distributes the profit to local organizations.

The other members of the board are ready to work, Chairman Randy Heard said.

"We're going to review it thoroughly," he said.

https://www.wfmz.com/news/area/lehighvalley/plainfield-residents-say-landfill-expansion-plan-disrespects-slate-belt/article_2ad2acc0-640e-11ea-81c1-ff92b0ad3a56.html