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RE: Monumental Year for Solid Waste Dept.

[Written by Sharon A. Driscoll, Madison County Public Information Officer and Recycling Coordinator]

Two thousand and seven was a monumental year for the Madison County Dept. of Solid Waste and Sanitation.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) approved the County's permit application that will allow the Dept. of Solid Waste and Sanitation to move forward with a 100 year expansion plan at the Buyea Rd. Landfill site; a project that has been on the drawing board for the past two years. And, at long last the Landfill Gas Utilization project will become a reality.

"According to information published by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), no other private or public landfill in the United States has any plans in place to cover the next 100 years," explained James A. Zecca, director of the Dept. of Public Waste and Sanitation.

Zecca explained that the permitting process, started two years ago, is very rigorous. The Department of Solid Waste was required to investigate a number of issues related to the landfill expansion. An archaeological survey was conducted by Alliance Archeological of Fayetteville, NY and coordinated with State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). "The process took one year to complete," according to Zecca.

A full Environmental Assessment Review, which included the potential impact on the land, water, air, animals, public health, noise and odor to name a few of the items that were investigated.

The landfill site, located on Buyea Rd. in the Town of Lincoln encompasses 615 acres. The West Side Landfill Expansion is located west of Buyea Road contiguous to the existing West Side Landfill. The lateral expansion footprint area is approximately 62.5 acres (i.e. limits of waste area) and comprised of 13 varying sized cells. An additional 123.3 acres – plus or minus- of land

will be developed for construction of the landfill containment berms, access roads and mining areas.

The Landfill Gas (LFG) collection system design for the expansion area incorporates both horizontal and vertical LFG collection. In general, horizontal collectors will be used to collect the LFG during waste placement within the landfill cell. Once the waste reaches final elevation deep vertical wells will be augured into the waste mass to effectively extract and collect the gas.

The County is currently going out to bid on the first landfill cell for the Landfill expansion project, and anticipates that construction of the new landfill cell will commence in early 2008.

Mike DeBottis, Chairman of the Solid Waste and Recycling Committee explained that the Dept. of Solid Waste and Sanitation is financially stable. DeBottis explained that the tipping fees paid by waste haulers and fees paid by other landfill users pay all of the operating expenses of the landfill. A portion of the tipping fees will be placed in the closure, post closure fund for future use. "All of the debt service (construction bonds used to finance the development of the first phase of the Landfill) will be paid off in mid-2008. The construction bond used to finance the second phase of the Landfill was paid off in 2007. Assuming that decisions made by future Boards of Supervisors do not alter the course set over the past eight years, Madison County will not be required to bond for future expansions," explained DeBottis.

Persistence on the part of county staff and the Board of Supervisors has brought a viable Landfill Gas-to-Energy project to fruition after ten years of searching. Landfill Gas is a natural byproduct of the decomposition of organic materials deposited in the Landfill. Landfill gas, a potent "greenhouse gas" known to be harmful to the environment, is composed of 50 % methane and is the source of odors which typically emanate from landfills. DeBottis, who is also Chairman of Madison County's Public Utility Service Committee (PUSC), explained that for the past ten years the PUSC has been investigating various opportunities to harness for beneficial uses the energy in the Landfill's methane gas. "With recent changes in the energy market, several viable possibilities have been found in the past year and a half," DeBottis said.

Following improvements to the system of pipes which carry the Landfill Gas in 2006 and 2007, and an engineering company's projection of the quality and quantity of gas available, the PUSC concluded that the marketplace would determine the best use for the Landfill Gas. A Request for Proposals process that started in early 2007 culminated on November 27, 2007 when the Madison County Board of Supervisors approved a contract with Waste Management Renewable Energy LLC of Houston, TX, allowing them to construct and operate a Landfill Gas Utilization Project at the Buyea Rd. Landfill site, for the purpose of generating electricity. "Construction of the electricity generation facilities is anticipated to be completed, and production of 'green' electricity is anticipated by the end of 2008," DeBottis said.

The County's share of the expected revenue from the Landfill Gas Utilization Project is approximately $9.3 million over the 20 year of the agreement with Waste Management Renewable Energy LLC. Some of the revenue from the project will reimburse the Solid Waste Department for its investments in the research and development of the project over the past ten

years, and will be used to help control costs and environmentally safe disposal of wastes generated by County residents and businesses.

The Board of Supervisors has anticipated that the majority of the expected revenues from production of renewable electricity and related environmental credits will be used to offset the County's general operating expenses, and thus will be a benefit for all of Madison County's taxpayers.

The Landfill Gas Utilization Project is estimated to produce 1.3 megawatts of electricity. Based on the Department of Energy’s estimate that an average home uses 10,656 kilowatt hours of electricity per year, the 1.3 megawatt project would provide electricity for 1,050 homes, or a community about the size of the Village of Cazenovia.

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