

Letter: Consultant needed for landfill capping

To the editor:

We would like to urge the citizens of Newburyport to support Mayor Al Lavender in an effort to have a consultant, preferably an engineer, oversee the landfill capping project on Crow Lane. The current owner of the landfill is legally bound by the Department of Environmental Protection to cap it. However, this can be done with our best interests in mind, minimizing the negative impact on the environment and water quality due to flooding and maximizing the future use of the land. The area would be ideal for passive recreation and open space.

At the public meeting on March 6, some red flags were raised, highlighting the need for representation on the city's part. Mr. Thibeault evaded questions regarding litigation toward him in some other land-capping projects. A neighbor raised the issue of the illegal dumping of fire hydrants and acetylene tanks, later covered up with a huge mound of crushed concrete that was also dumped on the land without a permit. The flooding issue of the surrounding wetlands and Little River was also discussed since the polyethylene membrane would create very fast run-off of rainwater. The conceptual design showed no retention pond for this run-off. The flooding in the surrounding neighborhoods is already a problem. We were told that there would be swales built around the cap, from which the water would exit into the marsh and the Little River.

Mr. Thibeault bought the land to dispose of as much construction debris as possible. Therefore, the project is currently designed to raise the cap another 20 feet from its current height of 55 feet. How would this facilitate its use for any kind of passive recreation except for enjoying the great view of the ocean it may offer? Also, given the enormous size of the proposed cap, 19,000 truckloads of various materials would be hauled in. The smaller the cap, the smaller number of tractor trailers would need to drive down small Newburyport roads all day long. The traffic, noise pollution and smog must also be considered.

The landfill is being capped to prevent the current waste from continuing to pollute the soil and ground water. Shouldn't this be done as soon and as fast as possible, not over three or four years?

These issues are all very important and no decision on any such project should be made without professional input. Many other towns have been required to cap their landfills but have hired planners to best represent their needs. Doesn't Newburyport deserve the same?

KIM KUDYM and JOE TEIXEIRA

Newburyport