

Legislator Michele Iannello      New Release May 7, 2007  
RE: Town of Tonawanda Landfill

Contact person: Jean Harmon  
857-6757

#### LEGISLATOR IANNELLO UPDATES ON 'TOXINS IN TONAWANDA'

As an elected official, I am faced daily with the anticipated business decisions of a County Legislator that take thought, discussion and fact finding. Once in awhile, however, an issue surfaces that is heart wrenching and touches one's emotions. This is how the Town of Tonawanda Landfill issue has affected me. It is government's responsibility to serve and protect the people. That is my main objective for this issue.

The Tonawanda Landfill presents a grave situation that has been in existence for decades but really came into the spotlight this winter as storm debris mounted and the smell became more pungent, affecting the lives of the nearby residents. The properties on Hackett Drive, adjacent to the Landfill are most severely affected. The current odors, however, do not reflect the problem of the thorium, radium, uranium and americium existent in the Landfill since the 1980's.

When the Landfill became a priority issue, I made it my priority, as the County Legislator representing both the Town and City of Tonawanda, to focus my attention on this Landfill. I began with a press conference at the site on January 8<sup>th</sup>. At that time I announced I was organizing a fact finding meeting in City of Tonawanda with all parties involved. All involved agencies and municipalities and myself were in attendance. That meeting served as preparation for a public meeting that I hosted on February 8, 2007 at Tonawanda High School. Over 175 persons attended to hear a presentation by the DEC and USACE involving the history of the Landfill and the promise of a proposed plan for closure by the end of March. At that time I vowed to pursue action regarding the health of the residents.

My first step was to host a conference call on March 19<sup>th</sup> with members of the NYS Dept. of Health, DEC, USACE, & involved elected officials. It was during this 90

minute conference call that the NYS Department of Health suggested the possibility of soil testing in the back yards on Hackett Drive. This was a positive step that the residents have been seeking for a very long time. The testing will take place the end of May and the DEC is hosting a public meeting on May 8<sup>th</sup> at Tonawanda High School to explain the testing. However, removal is still the ultimate goal.

The closure plan was released on March 26<sup>th</sup> with no plans for testing or removal. The normal 30 day public comment period was extended to 90 days per my request and those of other elected officials.

Prior to the announcement of the proposed testing, I introduced a resolution to the Erie County Legislature calling for removal and requesting the Energy and Environment Committee to host an informational meeting on May 8<sup>th</sup> allowing residents to be heard. Their comments will be recorded and entered into the official public record of the proposed plan by the USACE.

The next step will be the testing. After conversations with Joe Gardella of UB and Jackie Wood of the Clean Air Coalition of Western NY, the recommendation is to do the same testing that was done at Holmes School in the Town of Tonawanda. This included a chemical analysis of heavy metals such as lead, mercury, PCB's, pesticides and PAH, which are all cancer causing agents.

I assure you I will not rest until every test has been accomplished and removal is promised.