

{Following are emails from John McNamara concerning his presentations to the Brookhaven Town Board on 5/28/26, 6/11/26, 7/16/26 and 8/13/26. After the presentations is a section with links to sites dealing with environmental issues.}

On Thursday, May 28th, 2026, I made the following ideas about Waste Management to the Brookhaven Town Board (points from the Austin, Texas Waste Management Plan):

1. In creating their plan, the committee surveyed all the businesses to get a sense of their needs relative to waste management and their suggestions. This was crucial in getting them to support the plan and to feel heard and part of the process. I would suggest the same for the Town of Brookhaven as our plan is formed. This would be important for each of the four aspects of the plan that I have proposed to the town (see below).

2. Austin established Reuse and Repair Centers in convenient and accessible locations throughout Austin. These were helpful for two reasons: trash reduction and saving money for those looking to purchase items at a reduced price (note the increased popularity of our dollar stores in the current economic climate). This aspect is number four in the plan I submitted to the town (see below).

3. I introduced the concept of forming a Zero Waste plan as Austin did. I will expand on that at our next Town Board meeting on Thursday, June 11th. The Public Comment portion starts at 5pm.

The four part plan I shared with the Town Board is:

- 1. A SMART (Save Money And Reduce Trash) Program (to reduce our trash by 25%);***
- 2. A food waste composting and/or collection program (to reduce o trash by 25%);***
- 3. Passage of Packaging and Plastic Reduction legislation (to reduce our trash by 25%);***
- 4. Establishing Reuse and Repair Centers throughout the town (to reduce our trash by 20%).***

The key to our Waste Management going forward as we prepare for the closing of the Brookhaven Landfill in 2028 is waste reduction and diversion. The present amount of waste we generate is unhealthy and unsustainable going forward. We must also confront the environmental racism that has gone on for over 50 years in the North

Bellport community where the landfill is located and make reparations for the damage done to that community (manifested in higher rates of asthma and lower life expectancy).

If you would like to express your views on this important topic and give input to the town board as they form their plan for our Waste Management future after the closing of the Brookhaven Landfill in 2028, please join me on Thursday, June 11th, at 5pm. The Town Board is very open to listening and always responsive to your ideas.

Thank you for all you are doing to take care of our common home and cherish this precious gift of the environment that God has given to us!

=====

On Thursday, June 11th, I presented the following ideas to the Brookhaven Town Board as we prepare for the closing of our landfill in 2028:

- 1. Austin, Texas, has adopted a Zero Waste approach.***
- 2. It is a philosophy that goes beyond recycling.***
- 3. It focuses first on reducing trash and reusing products.***
- 4. The remainder is recycled or composted.***
- 5. Zero Waste recognizes that one person's trash is another's treasure.***
- 6. Everything is a resource for something or someone else.***
- 7. Zero Waste, however, is misunderstood.***
- 8. When you bring it up, most people immediately reject it as foolish and unworkable.***
- 9. Zero Waste International defines it in this way: The conservation of all resources by means of responsible production, consumption, reuse, and recovery of products, packaging, and materials without burning, and with no discharges to land, water, or air that threaten the environment or human health.***
- 10. This definition is worth looking at very thoroughly.***

11. The first thing to note is that it is a "conservative" approach. Many people have the false notion that Zero Waste is a "liberal" approach to Waste Management. It is not. The key question is, "How can I conserve the resources that we presently have?"

I will expand on this definition at our next Town Board meeting on Thursday, June 25th, at 5pm (public participation portion; each speaker gets 3 minutes). Please join with me as we work towards a solution to our waste disposal crisis on Long Island and throughout the United States.

Our task is to both preserve the beauty of our environment and to remedy the tragedy of environmental racism and injustice.

(Following is a letter written by John McNamara to the County Executive on 6/28/26)

Dear County Executive Romaine,

At the Larry Swanson Waste Management Symposium last Tuesday, June 22nd, you spoke about the need for a comprehensive plan for Suffolk County and your willingness to bring all the different levels of government together to enact a regional plan because of the crisis we are facing with the closing of the Brookhaven Town Landfill in 2028.

I would like to propose a four part plan that I think can be helpful for us. It is based on a waste reduction approach:

Part One: adopt a county wide Pay As You Throw or SMART (Save Money And Reduce Trash) program. You would do this by making special Suffolk County Trash bags available in our local supermarkets. These would be special bags with the Suffolk County imprint on it so that residents could not purchase bags on Amazon to avoid participating in the program. Only the official bags would be picked up by the carters. The bags would be priced to cover the cost of disposal.

When this program was started in Southold, there was a significant trash reduction: from 13,520 tons in 1993 to 7,500 tons in 2007.

Part Two: ban the sale of any packaging material that cannot be recycled. This ban would be similar to the ban that Suffolk County adopted on laundry detergents in the 1970s. It would be challenged in the courts but it would have a positive effect of

putting pressure on the state government to take meaningful action on the packaging issue. It makes no sense for us to pay to dispose of any material that cannot be properly recycled. We have accepted this nonsense for too long. We have to take action on this as a county because we have to transport our waste off island. Why should we pay millions of dollars to transport this packaging? It is better that we ban items that are in packaging that cannot be recycled so that we avoid these additional costs.

Part Three: establish a food waste composting program. This would emphasize each household composting their food waste to use the material for their lawns and gardens. To incentivize people to do this, we could charge a fee for residential food waste pickup. This could be collected in a special can similar to the curby for a monthly fee or the homeowner could do it on their own (which is really the better option) in a tumbler that the homeowner could buy from the county at a reduced rate for a one-time cost. This could be adapted for multi-family and apartment housing. We would also institute a mandatory food waste collection for businesses and schools. This would greatly reduce our volume of trash and also improve the quality of our soil.

Part Four: establish reuse and repair centers throughout the county in all towns to make them convenient for our residents. These would provide low cost options for our residents for clothes, toys, household goods, tools, sports equipment and other items of general use. These would be eliminated from our waste stream. The repair shops would also help to prevent residents from disposing of broken appliances and electronics. The cost of establishing these centers would be recovered by small fees and lower disposal costs.

It is my contention that these four steps taken countywide would greatly reduce our disposal costs, take trucks off the roads (helping both our traffic congestion problems and air quality issues), and ultimately improve the quality of life in our county.

Voluntary programs and appealing to the good will and environmental consciousness of our residents will not be effective for the scale of change that is needed in our situation. Our WTE infrastructure is aging and in need of significant upgrades which will cost large sums. These facilities also have air quality issues and

are mainly located in minority communities raising issues of discrimination and injustice. Rail is not a good option because of our single track, limited time to use the rail system (late evening and early morning), significant turnaround time, the need for a large amount of containers that are very costly, the need for storage for the rail cars, the host community fees, and the tipping fees (which are only rising).

We are running out of time to take action and we need a plan that will significantly reduce our waste or we will be facing a financial and environmental disaster. The only effective way to accomplish this is by financial incentive. If a resident has to pay to use the official county bag, they will realize that they can save money by disposing of their recyclables in the proper containers instead of throwing them in their bags and paying more money. The same principle will apply to their food waste. It will be much cheaper to compost their food waste in their backyards than to pay a monthly fee to have it carted away. Saving money is a superior motivator than all of our educational materials and public service announcements. Those will be helpful in launching our program but the financial aspect will be much more significant in the practical day by day operation of disposal for our residents. EVERYONE wants to save money.

With increased rates of recycling (as was clearly demonstrated when Southold adopted their Pay As You Throw or SMART program), the amount of money we obtain through sale of recyclables will also increase. This will help generate more funds to lower our disposal costs.

The most controversial part of this approach will be the ban on products that do not come in containers that can be recycled. This, however, is crucial to the success of what we want to do. If the product does not come in a #1, 2, or 5 plastic or a paper, bamboo, or glass container, it cannot be sold in any store in Suffolk County. This will be done because of health reasons. These other containers that cannot be recycled affect our health negatively by introducing plastics into our soils (and ultimately into our bodies), negatively affecting the quality of our air through increased diesel fuel pollution from the trucks that will be needed to transport them long distances to landfills all along the eastern coast. It makes no sense to sell these products that are doing so much damage to our residents and our environment. Giving manufacturers a 12 month notice of this ban should be enough time to allow them to make the necessary adjustments if they still want to sell their products in Suffolk County.

I heard you say that you want to convene government officials to discuss alternatives and to come up with a plan in September. I feel unless you have a detailed plan that you circulate before that meeting that you will not accomplish anything. We need a strong plan that will accomplish significant waste reduction and we needed it 50 years ago. Our present method of waste disposal is entirely ridiculous, irresponsible, and a disaster for our environment.

Thank you for your stated willingness to take serious action with regard to waste disposal.

Love,

John J. McNamra

Coordinator

CARITAS

On Thursday, July 16th, I presented some ideas on Waste Management as we are getting ready for the closing of the Brookhaven Town Landfill in 2028. I spoke about an alternative to our present practices of waste management called Zero Waste.

Zero Waste is defined by Zero Waste International as the conservation of all resources by means of responsible production, consumption, reuse, and recovery of products, packaging, and materials without burning, and with no discharges to land, water, or air that threaten the environment or human health.

Responsible production is one of our starting points. I posed the following question:

Why do we just accept the fact that manufacturers of various products are allowed to place their product in containers that cannot be recycled?

We have, of course, become used to this. We don't really think about it. We accept it as "normal". This is the way it has always been in our experience. Therefore, this is the way it has to be going forward. How dare we question it.

Are we really going to tell a manufacturer that they must place their product in a container or packaging that must be recycled? Who do we think we are? After all the manufacturers know best. We are merely the consumers.

The argument that the manufacturers will use is a very direct one: if we place our product in recyclable containers or packaging, the consumer will have to pay more. There isn't a long line of consumers who are eager to pay more for a product!

However, let us take a deeper look at this argument. If the container or packaging cannot be recycled, who will pay for the disposal cost? That cost will fall on our consumers in the form of:

- 1. higher cost for disposal;***
- 2. higher insurance costs for our health insurance due to the toxins that are created in the disposal process;***
- 3. more traffic on our roads as we have to transport the disposed and non recyclable containers and packaging to disposal sites;***
- 4. higher costs for hospitalization due to the disposal process which has been demonstrated in higher rates of asthma and other illnesses in those living near disposal sites;***
- 5. higher costs related to illnesses stemming from breathing in more fumes from the diesel trucks needed to transport this material and from the Waste to Energy facilities that are used in the disposal process;***
- 6. higher costs from the toxic ash disposal in the burning of the garbage that result in problems of plumes of dangerous chemicals and leachate disposal.***

These costs, as we know, are not paid by the manufacturer. They are paid, ultimately, by the consumer/taxpayer.

This discussion of Zero Waste and its implications for all of us as we approach the closing of our Brookhaven Town Landfill will be continued at our next Town Board meeting on Thursday, August 13th. The portion of the meeting reserved for Public Comment begins at 5pm. Each speaker gets 3 minutes to express concerns and ideas. Obviously, the more people who speak out on these issues, the greater the impact on the Town Board. The time is NOW!!!!

On Thursday, August 13th, I presented the following ideas to the Brookhaven Town Board as we try to increase our diversion rate with the looming closing of the Brookhaven Landfill in 2028:

- 1. the national campaign Skip the Stuff has been embraced by East Hampton, Quogue, Sag Harbor, Sagaponack, and Southampton;***
- 2. encourages and, in some cases, requires restaurants and delis to provide utensils, napkins, straws, and condiment packets only when customers request them;***
- 3. can help lower the costs for businesses;***
- 4. helps protect beaches and coastal waters;***
- 5. plastic is the most common form of marine debris;***
- 6. the estimate is that between 5 million and 12 million metric tons of plastic enter the world's oceans each year (UN report);***
- 7. East Hampton and Sag Harbor have ordinances (\$50 fine up to \$250 for multiple violations);***
- 8. Quogue, Sagaponack, and Southampton have approved resolutions but do not impose fines;***
- 9. members of the Southampton Village's environmental and sustainability committee have visited restaurants and delis to explain the policy and to encourage them to participate;***
- 10. a Skip the Stuff law was adopted by NYC in 2023;***
- 11. legislation is pending on the state level.***

After my presentation, Supervisor Panico said that he wrote a letter about this a year ago and is fully supportive of this initiative. It is certainly one step that can increase our diversion rate and keep single-use plastics out of the environment where they have done so much damage to our soil, water, air, and to animal and human life.

Thank you for all you are doing to improve our environment and lift up the quality of life in all our communities, especially those most impacted by our landfill and incinerators.

The next Town Board Meeting will be held on Thursday, August 27th. The opportunity to speak about your environmental concerns is at 5pm. Each speaker gets three minutes. You sign up before 5pm (4:45 to 4:55pm).

My topic will be on Zero Waste approaches to increase our diversion rate. The more speakers we have addressing these issues at our Town Board Meetings, the more effective and compelling we will be. This is our opportunity to build a better environment going forward. Don't let it pass you by!!!

Here is a list of links to websites that pertain to the general topics of clean air and water, which go hand in hand with Zero Waste. When you first click on a link you may be asked if you trust the website to which the link will take you. Answer “yes”, that you trust the website.

- ***[NYSHABS](#) – The New York Harmful Algal Bloom System (NYHABS) is now active. As the 2026 harmful algal blooms (HABs) notification season starts, this system will provide New Yorkers, including trained citizens, the ability to send reports of HABs to DEC electronically via a simple, user-friendly form.***
- ***[DECinfo Locator](#) – An interactive map that lets you access DEC documents and public data about the environmental quality of specific sites in NYS, as well as outdoor recreation information.***
- ***[DEC Delivers](#) – Stay in-the-know by subscribing to the environmental topics that interest you. We will send you information, updates, and e-newsletters on the topics of your choosing. As an [Air Mail! subscriber](#), you may be interested in subscribing to the [Air Quality Alert topic](#) so you know when air quality levels are a concern in your area.***

- [***DEC Does What?!***](#) – Check out our new podcast, which highlights what DEC does to protect our environment.
- [***AQI Forecasts***](#) – Check the daily ozone and particulate matter pollution forecast for your area of NYS.
- [***NYSDEC YouTube***](#) – Keep up with what's going on with DEC staff by subscribing to our YouTube channel. Watch video clips of DEC public protection in action, learn about the Hudson River, or watch the latest episode of "On the Front Lines," DEC's video series.
- [***Conservationist***](#) – NYS's premier outdoor magazine--bringing nature to your door! Published six times a year, Conservationist is a NYS-focused magazine that is packed with informative and entertaining articles, first-rate photography, and stunning artwork. Articles cover a broad range of environmental and natural history related topics. [***Subscribe today***](#) to get a piece of the outdoors in your mailbox.