

The Daily Item

SERVING THE NORTH SHORE SINCE 1877

Report on WIN: the air is clear

By Charlie McKenna

Tech Environmental, a Waltham-based environmental consultant, submitted a report to the Board of Health that shows that even under the “worst case meteorological conditions” the WIN Waste Innovations waste-to-energy plant will not cause adverse effects on air quality.

The 25-page report was submitted to the board this month after the company conducted a year-long review of WIN’s plant and adjacent ash monofill, including a review of stack test data from April 2022 and random site inspections. Tech Environmental has been conducting annual monitoring of WIN for the Board of Health since a 2011 settlement between the company and the attorney general’s office.

“In the course of the monitoring program for calendar year 2022, all evidence suggests that the facility was in compliance with its permitted conditions,” the report reads.

The review included the examination of reports submitted by the company to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and the Environmental Protection Agency, which the company is required to submit on a regular basis.

In addition to assessing the company’s waste-to-energy plant, the report also examined the company’s ash monofill. It concluded that “ash is not being released into the atmosphere.”

“The inspections and subsequent report

reviews indicated that the landfill was being properly operated and maintained,” the report reads. “The ash being disposed of in the landfill had an operational cover.”

WIN Vice President Environmental Jim Connolly, in a telephone interview Monday afternoon, said the report confirms the company’s “substantial efforts” to ensure the facility operates in compliance with permits and regulations to protect the environment and public health.

The report “should really bring comfort to the Board of Health and to our neighbors,” Connolly said. “Despite what some people may be saying and misrepresenting, there is no risk to public health or the environment from our operations.”

The report also notes that “the maximum predicted air toxics concentrations are predicted to be safely in compliance with the Allowable Ambient Limits and Threshold Effects Exposure Limits guidelines and will not have an adverse impact on public health.”

Connolly also pointed out that the review found the company remained below permitted levels for Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) emissions, which he said are “in the high 170s” in parts per million.

“We’ve confirmed that there’s no health impacts from the NOx emissions as they currently are, which would meet the new permit limits that have been imposed,” Connolly said.

“This report did a good job of really looking at our operation and we’re pleased to see that it verified that our

efforts to operate in compliance and protective of public health and the environment have been successful,” he said.

WIN’s facility has come under added scrutiny in recent years as the company and the town have moved forward on negotiating a Host Community Agreement (HCA). The agreement would generate millions in revenue for the town in exchange for allowing the company to expand its ash monofill once it hits the 50-foot cap it is currently permitted for. Many opponents have pointed to perceived negative environmental impacts — particularly on air quality — in expressing their opposition to the HCA.

A version of the HCA was approved by a 3-2 margin by the Board of Selectmen and a revised version of the agreement has remained tabled since January pending a request from members for additional information. The revised agreement is set to come back before the board in the coming weeks.

Connolly said the report reinforces the idea that regulatory agencies are keeping a close eye on the company’s environmental performance.

Should the facility encounter an “upset condition,” an instance when something goes wrong or the company is no longer operating within permitted levels, it is required to notify MassDEP. Connolly said the company has “taken it upon” itself to also notify the Board of Health in those cases.

“We want to have a positive relationship with the community we operate in,” he said.