

Government, The Neighborhood Files

Mayor's Denial Of EPA Plan 'Awesome,' Says Resident

Paula DeAngelis said she was pleased to hear that Mayor Joseph Polisena has turned down a request by the EPA to bury toxic soil in Johnston.

By [Joseph Hutnak](#) | [Email the author](#) | January 6, 2012

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Mulberry Circle resident Paula DeAngelis had been preparing to hand out flyers to her neighbors about a proposal by the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to bury toxic soil from Centredale at the Johnston public works department property — but after [Mayor Joseph Polisena announced he no longer supports the plan](#), DeAngelis said she's pleased with the decision.

"That's awesome — I'm so happy that they decided to drop it," DeAngelis said during a phone interview on Jan. 5. "I would have been upset if it had been put anywhere in Johnston — what bothered me was the fact that they were considering putting it where people live."

Polisena sent a letter to the EPA on Dec. 29 that told the agency the town would no longer support the concept of burying toxic soil in Johnston. A meeting planned for Jan. 11 to discuss the proposal has been cancelled.

During a separate phone interview, Polisena said town officials "were never potentially considering it," adding he had reservations about the proposal from the beginning.

"I had a funny feeling when I first sat down, but I wanted to give them the benefit of the doubt and listen to what they had to say," Polisena explained. "I wouldn't be open-minded if I didn't sit down and listen to them and just shut the door and said 'Scram' — that's not a leader, that's being close-minded. I listened to it and I digested it and I said, 'Guess what? We're not getting anything out of it, this is bad for the community,' so as long as I'm sitting here, this is not going to happen."

The mayor also said he plans to work with the town council to present the report to the residents in a straightforward manner.

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"There's no upside, and we're going to fight any effort if someone tries to sell (EPA) their land and put it on their land," Polisen explained. "Were going to dig our heels in and fight it, we're not going to lay down."

Said DeAngelis: "I am very glad that the town and our mayor has decided to do that. I'm very happy with that."

EPA Rep Explains Material, Storage Plans

Just what was the material being proposed for burial in Johnston?

EPA Community Involvement Coordinator Stacy Greendlinger said during an interview on Jan. 6 that the soil taken from the banks of the Woonasquatucket has varying levels of contaminants, including **Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)** and **dioxin**. [Links go to EPA information pages.]

Under the EPA's plan, the most contaminated soil would be separated from less-toxic material and removed from the site. The soil with lower toxicity levels would be contained in what's called an "upland confined disposal facility," essentially a lined pit dug into the ground.

[An EPA document showing an upland confined disposal facility is attached to this article.]

Greendlinger explained that the toxic material in the soil planned for the Johnston site wouldn't pose a threat to nearby water sources.

"It's the least contaminated of the soil," Greendlinger explained. "It doesn't leech, it doesn't volatilize, it doesn't move. The process we're talking about, we'd squeeze out as much water from the material as possible before we store it — you're really having material that has contamination that's really binding to it and holds on to it."

Greendlinger said anything from parking lots and recreational facilities to new homes can be built on top of the sites where such material is buried.

"There are things you can do in the future for potential use" since the EPA considers the soil no threat to the nearby area," Greendlinger said.

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