

Plainfield gearing up to fight trash plant proposal

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By Sara Bedigian Day Staff Writer

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Plainfield — SMART Technologies has asked the Connecticut Siting Council to approve its proposed waste-to-energy trash plant without requiring the project to undergo the “full Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need process.”

The [93-page petition](#) filed with the Siting Council Friday includes the description of the proposed facility that would convert municipal solid waste into 45 megawatts of electric power and renewable natural gas. It also details the operations of the facility and addresses safety procedures and potential effects on air and water quality, wildlife and habitats, noise and truck traffic.

SMART said in the petition that because the facility is a renewable energy source and claims to meet air and water quality standards, the Siting Council can approve it through a

declaratory ruling, avoiding the full certificate process of environmental compatibility and public need.

The SMART trash plant facility would be constructed on 81 acres within a larger 506-acre sand and gravel mine property owned by O&G Industries, which operates Rawson Materials near the intersection of Norwich Road and Black Hill Road. The site is undeveloped except for sand and gravel operations.

The Siting Council received the petition Aug. 7 and said the public comment deadline for state agencies or municipal comments to request party or intervenor status is Sept. 6. The [deadline for action](#) is Oct. 6 and a deadline for a final decision is Feb. 3, 2027.

The proposed [plant](#) would convert waste to energy through a multi-step process that includes material separation, gasification, power generation, anaerobic digestion and carbon capture.

SMART said the facility is designed to have a daily acceptance rate of 1,800 tons of trash, with an expected maximum acceptance rate of 2,500 tons per day. The petition said the facility expects around 120 truck loads per weekday.

If approved, the construction of the project is expected to take three years, beginning in July 2027, according to SMART's filing. Completion is set for late 2030 and operations are expected to begin in early 2031.

SMART said in its application Friday that the facility "will be operated to maximize benefits of the circular economy and dramatically reduce environmental and community impacts compared to present solid waste management practices."

The company also claimed it "will contribute to Connecticut's renewable energy portfolio standards and will advance the state's renewable energy goals."

Plainfield's response

Residents have been [opposing](#) the facility since SMART first proposed it in 2023.

First Selectman Kevin Cunningham responded to the petition at the Board of Selectman meeting Monday night and said that he wants to hire attorneys to fight SMART and hold a town vote to allocate money from the town's fund balance to pay the legal fees.

"They [SMART Technologies] want to have a determination right now, so that requires us to act quickly at this point," Cunningham said.

Selectmen Mike Surprenant and Tom Sinkewicz agreed that due to the developer's declaratory ruling request, the town needs to be prepared to act quickly.

The board voted to hold a public information meeting and vote to fund attorneys to fight the plan on Aug. 26 at 6:30 p.m.

Cunningham said he plans to ask for increments starting at \$250,000.

“The town of Plainfield has a good reserve fund, so we have enough money to fight for a while,” Cunningham said. “It’s up to the public to make that vote.”

While the state holds permitting authority, in a June 2025 town referendum, 90% of 1,273 residents voting to oppose the plant.

Resident Jon Von Ohlsen, chairman of the town’s Strategic Planning Committee, disagreed Monday night with SMART’s claim that the trash plant is a public need.

“We’re going to have a trash plant that’s more efficient in composting and digesting and getting rid of trash, it’s going to lead to even more trash production,” he said.

Residents also have created a [website](#) about the trash plant to keep residents informed of where the application stands.

s.bedigian@theday.com

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