

# Group protests Essex County landfill sale

By LOHR MCKINSTRY  
Staff Writer  
Southern Essex Bureau

ELIZABETHTOWN — The Residents Committee to Protect the Adirondacks wants Essex County to keep its landfill or at least hold a public hearing on the sale.

The Essex County Board of Supervisors voted during a Ways and Means Committee session last week to sell the debt-ridden landfill in Lewis to Serkil Inc. of Castleton for \$5 million in cash and a guaranteed \$35-a-ton dumping fee for Essex County residents. Serkil would make its profit on out-of-county trash.

The Residents Committee is a 2,000-member grass-roots environmental group headquartered in North Creek, Warren County.

Residents Committee Executive Director Peter Bauer didn't like the Serkil deal and blasted the county for what he called "short-term thinking and betrayal of trust" of Lewis residents.

"The landfill was sited and constructed in the Town of Lewis for Essex County garbage, not garbage from all over the Northeast and not for incinerator ash," he said. "Privatization would quite simply shaft Lewis."

Serkil officials admit there will be many more trucks going to the landfill but say they will take only trash generated within New York state and no incinerator ash.

The county recently reduced its dump fee from \$144.50 a ton to \$75 a ton to keep North Elba from taking its trash elsewhere, but is losing money at that price.

Bauer wants the county to put the landfill debt on property taxes and raise operating money through sale of bag stickers that residents would have to buy.

Since the towns using the landfill now sell stickers or specially marked trash bags of their own to cover their transfer-station costs, the county stickers would be an additional requirement.

"To put it on the tax levy is the most asinine solution I've ever heard of," said Supervisor Thomas Scozzafava, R-Moriah, a Landfill Sale Committee member. "To put the debt service on the landfill is so unjust."

"Senior citizens who live alone in a \$70,000 home, or a family of five in a \$50,000 home, that's who's going to be paying for the landfill? That's not a solution. It should not even be considered a solution."

Bauer also wants the county to schedule a public hearing before the sale is finalized.

"I don't object to a public hearing," Scozzafava said. "I don't have any problem with that."

The Residents Committee wants the county to sell 50-cent stickers for 16-gallon bags, to raise \$1.25 million, based on 10,000 tons of garbage a year from within the county.

"These people are obviously way out of touch with reality," Scozzafava said. "Do they realize Essex County residents

are paying \$3 a bag now for garbage?" Scozzafava said the high cost of trash disposal already has people throwing garbage over embankments.

"If they're that concerned about the environment, they ought to take a ride around these back roads," he said. "Between the roadside dumping and the burn barrels, it's wreaking more havoc on the environment than the old landfills."

"It was pressure from these very same groups that closed the old landfills, with very little or no proof of toxicity," Scozzafava continued. "The reason we're in the situation we're in is because of pressure from the very same groups who now don't want us to sell."

It cost Essex County about \$7 million to build its regional landfill in Lewis after the state Department of Environmental Conservation ordered town dumps to close. The county built a landfill because spreading the cost among all 18 towns was the only way it was affordable.

Scozzafava suggested the Residents

## Supervisors to meet

ELIZABETHTOWN — The regular board meeting of the Essex County Board of Supervisors will be held Monday, Nov. 6, at 10 a.m. in the Essex County Board of Supervisors Chambers, Essex County Government Center, Elizabethtown.

Resolutions from the committee meetings during the month of October will be considered. The meeting is open to all.

Committee itself might be able to help financially.

"If they're that concerned about the environment, one of the solutions, if they have the membership they claim they have and the concern is there, set up a fund and give the county board \$850,000 a year, and we'll keep the landfill and we'll only accept Essex County garbage," he said.



Staff Photo/Mike Dowd

Champlain Volunteer Fire Department rescue personnel and State Police investigators look over the wreckage of an accident in which a Rouses Point teen-ager died.

## CRASH...

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He was in intensive care and listed in serious condition.

Jason Rushford was driving his mother's 1988 Pontiac Grand Prix south on Ridge Road around 8:53 a.m., Olsen said. Rushford and his pas-

sengers were on their way to the Miner Institute in Chazy, but it is unclear why.

Rushford failed to make a right-hand curve in the road and veered off the east side, Olsen said. The car then rolled over several times, coming to rest on Matott Road hundreds

of feet away.

Rushford, his mother and Atkins were all ejected from the car, Olsen said.

"We know (the car) was well in excess of the posted speed limit," Olsen said, adding that the accident is under investigation. The area of the

crash has a caution sign posted carrying a 30-mph speed limit for the curve, Olsen said.

Fire departments responded from Champlain, Rouses Point, Mooers, Chazy and West Chazy. CVPH Ambulance also responded.

## REGIONAL ROUNDUP

### Questionnaire on Jay bridge sent out

JAY — A questionnaire has been mailed to every Post Office box and mail stop in the Town of Jay by Bridge and Beyond.

The citizens group has been fighting to preserve the Jay covered-bridge area since a New York State Department of Transportation plan to construct a new concrete-and-steel bridge there surfaced in 1992.

The questionnaire includes the newly approved position statement of Bridge and Beyond and asks town residents to declare their support or lack of support for it.

The position statement reads: "Bridge and Beyond's primary objective is the preservation of the scenic upstream area within sight of the Jay covered bridge, including the covered bridge and the swimming area. We adamantly oppose any new structure 600 feet upstream of the historic 1857 bridge because it would violate the preservation of this scenic area."

For more information on the townwide mailing or Bridge and Beyond, call Fred Balzac at 946-7861 or Kathleen Recchia at 946-8323.

### Trail spruce-up completed; hundreds participate

LAKE PLACID — The Adirondack Mountain Club Trails Program completed more than 9,500 hours of trail work in 1995 with the help of 16 paid professional trail workers and 254 volunteers.

Bill Brousseau, ADK trails director, said, "Project sites are diverse with crews building rock steps, relocating privies, constructing bog bridges and sidestepping overgrown trails. Crews worked at a variety of sites, including Ampersand Mountain near Saranac Lake, the Northville-Placid Trail and the Big Indian-Neversink Valley in the Catskills."

"When volunteers complete a week-long project their feeling of achievement is overwhelming," said Kathryn Goth, a high-school volunteer. "One would never think that repairing a trail could take so much work. It is much more complicated than it seems. I have a wonderful feeling of accomplishment after all of the effort that I have put into the project."

For more information on how you can help, contact the ADK Trails Program, P.O. Box 867, Lake Placid, N.Y. 12946, or call 523-3441.

# Early morning fire kills Saranac Lake teen-ager

By JOHN LAMOUREUX

A tragic Tuesday morning blaze claimed the life of 16-year-old Paul Schlitt, a junior at Saranac Lake High School and a student of conservation at the BOCES Adirondack Educational Center.

The early morning fire gutted the second- and third-story apartment behind Stewart's convenience store in Saranac Lake. The first story of the house, once the storefront of a roofing business, sustained water damage.

Schlitt was believed to be home alone at the 10 Depot Street apartment when a fire broke out about 12:30 a.m.

It appears the fire was caused by an electrical malfunction, investigators said Wednesday.

While they will never know for sure what caused the fire, investigators detected evidence of electrically produced heat in the living-room wall, where the fire started, Saranac Lake Police Chief Kathleen Peer and Fire Chief Harrison Kent reported.

### Trial continued

Testimony this week in the attempted murder trial of Nikolous Koufomichalis

Koufomichalis focused on accounts of alleged attacks by Koufomichalis.

Friday, 15-year-old Kara Moulton told jurors Koufomichalis threatened to blow up her house and hurt her family unless she sold marijuana for him. She testified that she saw Koufomichalis beat Vanessa Jones, her son and the family dog.

On Thursday, family friend Don Cheney Jr., 18, said Koufomichalis tried to hang the family dog by its leash over the bathroom door and then threatened to do the same to Jones. "He tried putting (the leash) around her neck," Cheney testified. But Koufomichalis stopped before anything happened, he said.

Johnny Jones, 14-year-old son of Vanessa Jones, testified that



Nikolous Koufomichalis

## THE WEEK IN REVIEW

he saw Koufomichalis beat his mother and that Koufomichalis's behavior became dramatically violent for the first time in late winter.

Johnny Jones said Koufomichalis "put my mom against the wall and was choking her." He said he saw Koufomichalis throw his mother against the wall, smashing her hand and head through it.

He described being punched in the mouth by Koufomichalis and said he witnessed Koufomichalis beating the dog on many occasions. Jones said Koufomichalis used "frying pans, the metal part of a leash, kitchen chairs," a baseball bat and a stun gun on the dog.

Koufomichalis, 28, is accused of beating and trying to kill Vanessa Jones, beating her two children and torturing her dog between December 1994 and February 1995.

He has pleaded innocent to a 36-count indictment including second-degree attempted

murder, endangering the welfare of a child and four counts of torturing animals.

The indictments also allege that he threatened to kill Vanessa Jones and her children unless they lied to police about a false burglary report he is accused of making.

### High peaks plan presented

Dozens of people Wednesday defended lean-tos, group hikes, cellular phones, unleashed dogs and their favorite things about hiking in the High Peaks Wilderness.

At the first of five public hearings on a draft management plan for the area surrounding New York's highest mountains, hikers applauded the state Department of Environmental Conservation for trying to prevent the 226,000-acre area from being trampled by too many feet.

But most also found a piece of their self-interest threatened in

the details. Some of the issues raised:

• Class field trips would be hampered by limiting camping and day-hiking groups sizes to 10, but special permits would let educational institutions lead groups of 30.

• Lean-tos, three-sided shelters, should be treated as assets rather than discouraged.

• Cellular phones should be allowed as they help even the well-prepared hikers in dangerous situations.

• Adirondack Mountain Club members attacked the central tenet of the plan: limit camping by issuing a restricted number of permits, possibly with fees.

All input will be used in writing a final plan, according to DEC Regional Director Stuart Buchanan.

### Lawless death ruled accidental

The drowning death of Seumas "Shem" Lawless, 17, was accidental, the Franklin County Coroner has ruled.

In his written determination, Coroner Brian Langdon said, "A preponderance of evidence supports neither a suicidal death or a homicidal death therefore, by law, the death must be ruled accidental."

He said this does not establish conclusively that the death was not suicide or homicide, and if other evidence is found supporting such a theory, the inquest does not preclude civil or criminal proceedings.

The coroner also wrote that charges may be brought in connection with a party that occurred two days before the Owens Head teen was found dead in the Salmon River under the Main Street bridge.



Shem Lawless

### Robert J.

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