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Monmouth

It smells worse than a septic tank. Hundreds of angry residents turn up to complain about local dump.

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The Monmouth County Reclamation Center landfill in Tinton Falls is visible through the Asbury Avenue gate. Residents say the smell is worse than ever.

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By [Steve Strunsky | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)

Confronted Monday night by more than 300 area residents angry over the worsening stench of the [Monmouth County landfill](#), county officials offered an explanation of what had caused the problem and assurances it would begin to wane by March. They also took the blame for failing to communicate adequately with the public and local leaders.

But even after the assurances from Monmouth County officials and from state Sen. Vin Gopal (D-11th), residents attending a meeting hosted by Gopal at a firehouse in neighboring Neptune lined up tell officials just how bad the smell in town is.

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"I was sitting in my house the other night and I said, 'It stinks outside. I know, because it stinks in here,'" said Tinton Falls resident Camille LoSapio, who, after living in her house on Hawthorne Drive for three years, already wants to leave. **"But there's no way I can sell, because it stinks every day."**

State Sen. Vin Gopal on Monmouth County landfill



Another resident, Marisa Scott, said the stench from the landfill across from her house on Shafto Road had gotten so bad that it regularly triggered asthma attacks in her 7-year-old daughter, Luna. "This is her medicine," said Scott, holding up a bag of inhalers.

Steve Garcia, a tree cutter who also drives a septic truck, said, "When you're on Shafto Road in the summer and you open that septic tank, it smells better than the landfill."

The landfill, known as the Monmouth County Reclamation Center, is where the county's household trash and construction debris has been piled since 1976, occupying a 103-acre site on Asbury Avenue, just west of the Garden State Parkway.

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“On certain days, you can smell it even coming off the Parkway,” said Kim Tamborra of Aberdeen, who was working Monday afternoon at the Associated Humane Societies on Shafto Road, where at least the smell isn’t a problem for the 160 dogs and cats sheltered there. “Thankfully, they like things that smell bad, so it doesn’t effect them in a negative way.”

N.J. town literally stinks -- and now the neighbors can smell it, too

The county’s deputy administrator, Geoffrey Perselay, gave a brief history of the landfill, which was created under a 1970 state law, the Solid Waste Management Act, mandating that each of New Jersey’s 21 counties be responsible for the disposal of its own municipal trash.

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For decades, residents of Tinton Falls and the surrounding area put up with the smell, and Monmouth County voters rejected a referendum in 1991 that would have built an incinerator to burn garbage instead of burying it.

Perselay said work to channel and contain the leachate required uncovering 11 acres of previously capped trash, which let loose intensely foul fumes.

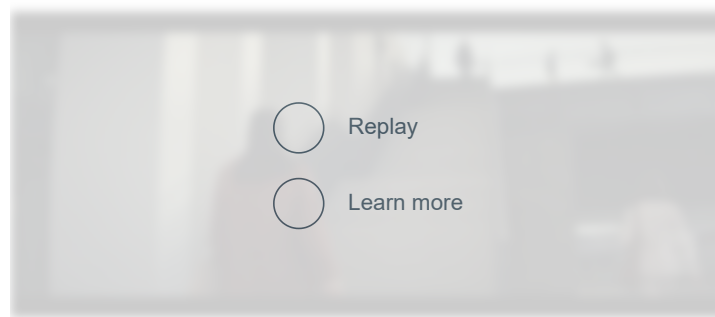
In one of several mea culpas by officials on Monday night, Perselay admitted he had failed to notify Tinton Falls officials of the work and its potential smell.

“And that’s my fault,” he told the crowd.



Marisa Scott, in red, tells state Sen. Vin Gopal (D-11th), who is standing by a podium, that the smell from the Monmouth County landfill near her home in Tinton Falls has gotten so bad that it often triggers asthma attacks in her 7-year-old daughter, Luna. (Steve Strunsky | for NJ Advance Media)

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Gopal plays no direct role in the landfill's operation but was invited to host the meeting by Tinton Falls Councilman Christopher Pak as a state-level lawmaker whose constituents are being negatively impacted. Gopal was blunt in his assessment of the situation. "We understand that none of you should be here tonight," he told the gathering. "Government has failed."

Apart from recapping the 11 exposed acres of landfill, **Perselay said the county would employ several strategies that would begin to mitigate odor by March, with a "significant" reduction by summertime.**

Those include a new methane gas collection system, and implementation of the leachate collection system. Perselay also said the county was increasing the use of spot deodorizer in priority areas, and had dedicated crews of workers specifically for odor reduction. He also said the county was evaluating an “odor misting” system, which would pump a mist around the perimeter of the landfill site to literally block odors from escaping.

One resident, Charles Lomagino, who works in the waste hauling business, recommended sending the county’s trash to privately run landfills in Pennsylvania. And several others raised the idea of holding another incinerator referendum.

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Some said they have made countless calls to a “hotline” number listed on the county website that were never followed up on. Officials acknowledged that the number was for the security desk at the landfill, and Freeholder Director Thomas Arnone, who was at the gathering, promised to have it removed.

State Department of Environmental Protection Acting Director of Air Chris Odgers told residents to call a DEP toll free number, 877-927-6337, instead. Residents were also told to call in complaints to the Monmouth County Regional Health Commission at 732-493-9520. The commission’s health officer, David Henry, was one of the few officials praised by residents for his responsiveness.

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