Borough Sets Sights on Landfill Expansion

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

The Kodiak landfill is quickly filling up, but the borough has had an expansion plan in the works for some time. But as Borough Manager Bud Cassidy explains, the landfill isn’t simply a hole in the ground. This means expanding the area, or even closing out the old space, is a huge undertaking.

“Everything about the landfill, it’s an engineered mountain," Cassidy said. "We’ve finished our existing footprint, or we will in the next year or so. So we’re building a new cell, and this new cell has to meet all the EPA, DEC regulations.”

Cassidy said new regulations require all of the liquids that come out of the garbage, as well as any rainfall, need to be captured and sent to a water treatment plant. Part of the expansion project is construction of a treatment plant at the low point in the landfill.

At about $25 million, Cassidy said the new landfill will be much more costly than the previous one. He attributes the price tag to complex engineering and needed equipment to meet Environmental Protection Agency and Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation’s standards.

He said the hope is to have the new cell up and running in 2014.

“Give or take how much, you know the more we recycle. Maybe the longer period of time we might have to use the original footprint. But even after it’s completed we have to close it out," he said. "It’s pretty expensive to close a cell out. Then you have a 30 year required monitoring.”

The borough is set to receive $4.5 million from the state capital budget that was passed during the legislative session that ended in April. Cassidy said that money is solely designated for the landfill expansion, which will certainly help buffer the high cost of the project.

“The message is having a landfill on an island in the North Pacific is pretty expensive. There’s no doubt about that. And I can’t say enough about the more recycle the longer our landfills will last.”

The legislative grant the borough received for the project isn’t necessarily a done deal. The entire capital budget is still awaiting the governor’s signature.