Assembly Express Concerns With Landfill Change Orders

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Last week the Kodiak Island Borough Assembly approved another in a long and expensive series of change orders for the landfill expansion project.

The order included four big changes, including relocating the leachate collection line. Borough Manager Bud Cassidy said the line was originally designed to be under cell two of the landfill, but it will be relocated into what is called the proposed perimeter road. Cassidy said the change order also addresses additional water that is flowing onto the site. He said they will be widening an existing ditch and controlling flow of the water into a wetland, which will require an Army Corps of Engineers permit.

Those changes come at cost of almost $1.2 million, which frustrated Assemblyman Mel Stephens.

“There’s got to be a limit to some of these costs. The landfill project strikes me as being completely out of control with one change order after another coming up and with the assembly basically being told and concluding, what is probably true, gee, do we have any choice, because we need a new landfill.”

Assemblyman Aaron Griffin was also bothered by having to relocate the leachate collection line. CH2M Hill designed the original line plan, which according to Borough Engineer Dave Conrad, didn’t make a lot sense. Conrad explained why during the assembly’s September 26 work session.

“I’ve been doing maintenance for most of my adult life and I’ve been in sewers and everything else in the world and it seems very counter intuitive to me to stack 20 years of garbage on top of a pipe that you can’t get to. SO this change order moves this pipe into this road corridor and provides manhole access.”

Griffin questioned CH2M Hill’s engineering quality, and the fact that errors and oversights in the company’s landfill designs have resulted in a slew of change orders for the project.

“Are we getting shoddy work out of this company that we are paying so much money? We have them doing engineering and then we have to go back through with our own staff and it takes our own staff to have some common sense to say wait a minute, what you are doing doesn’t make any sense. You know it’s not like we’re getting our money back from them for the engineering work that they did. I just think that maybe we have to come to a point in

time where we really should be evaluating exactly what value this
company provides to us in terms of the landfill.”

Assemblywoman Louise Stutes echoed Griffin’s statements, but said she would still vote in favor of the change order.

“We’ve got to stop and
take a look at CH2M Hill. I mean we’ve put out a lot of dough. And it’s
almost like oh geez, how are we going to make payroll. I know! Let’s
give the KIB another change order. It’s almost that way. It’s constant.
It seems to me, if they are the original designers, maybe we need to
take a step back and reevaluate just what kind of bang we’re getting for
our buck with them.”

Another part of the change order would credit the project almost $138,000. Cassidy explained:

“Since we’re not putting
the leachate collection line under cell 2 there’s a bunch of concrete
that we will not be using, so we’ll get a credit for that. As well there
will be a credit for gravel that we’re going to be using onside instead
of importing it offsite.”

The assembly approved the changes in a six to one vote with Stephens dissenting.