

# WASTE-TO-GAS SITE BREAKS GROUND

But neighbors worry facility will befoul the area

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As the founders of Long Island Compost and their majority investors broke ground Wednesday in Yaphank on a facility to turn food waste into biogas and fertilizer, some neighbors who object to the plan are raising alarms.

In a statement released to Newsday before the groundbreaking, the Brookhaven Landfill Action & Remediation Group, a residents coalition, raised questions about whether the new anaerobic digester would contribute to the “surrounding overburdened community” becoming the “garbage capital of Long Island without any public planning process.”

But officials at the groundbreaking stressed that American Organic Energy (AOE) has been meeting with public officials and community groups for years, and that the facility would improve air quality and the environment, not worsen it.

“They are under a fundamental misunderstanding about the facility and what we do and the extent of reaching out we’ve gone through over 10 years,” said chief executive Charles Vigliotti.

The neighborhood group accused the state Department of Environmental Conservation,



Officials including former U.S. Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, center, and Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone at the groundbreaking ceremony for a new anaerobic digester facility in Yaphank Wednesday.

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Suffolk County and Brookhaven Town of having “abandoned public sustainable regional waste planning,” adding the “result is that even a seemingly environmentally beneficial anaerobic digester is advancing environmental injustice.”

One local resident, Annelies Kamran, charged that residents have had “no voice in this” and said truck traffic alone will “negatively impact the area.”

“How is trucking food waste

60 miles from New York an environmental solution?” asked Brookhaven resident Kerim Odekon in an email to Newsday.

But Suffolk Executive Steve Bellone said the facility during its planning stages had “significant community input,” but noted, “You’re never going to make everybody completely happy.”

Bellone called construction of the digester a “landmark occasion for the region,” and an “incredible project that moves us into the 21st century.”

Kevin Molloy, spokesman for Brookhaven Town, noted the

state DEC is responsible for regulating regional waste management, “not any individual local municipality.” Brookhaven, he said, “has repeatedly stressed the need for a regional waste management plan for Long Island and successfully lobbied for state funding for a study to address the future of waste management on Long Island.”

A DEC spokesman didn’t immediately provide a comment.

At the groundbreaking, former U.S. Sen. Alfonse D’Amato said the project would set a precedent for the region that

“should be spread throughout the country.”

Vigliotti, who also co-founded Long Island Compost with his brother Arnold, said earlier this month that the project will take lessons from his earlier feuds with residents over Long Island Compost.

Vigliotti on Wednesday said around 60 truckloads carrying 600 tons of food waste a day would enter the indoor facility when it’s completed by the end of next year. He stressed that it’s taking food that would otherwise be dumped in landfills, some as far away as Virginia and North Carolina.

He said the anaerobic digester will do much of its work in a large contained indoor facility, turning food waste into biogas that will be sold to a third party using the National Grid gas distribution system. Solid and liquid waste will be sold as fertilizer and water at the end of the cycle will be sent to the Bergen Point treatment facility.

AOE’s application for tax and other incentives from the Brookhaven Industrial Development Agency shows the facility could receive a mortgage recording tax exemption of up to \$723,750 and a sales tax exemption on facilities equipment and other materials of up to \$5.7 million, and it could make payments in lieu of taxes of from \$12,280 to \$14,670 over 10 years. IDA chief Lisa Mulligan and AOE said the figures could change before the application is finalized.

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