

Board approves \$9.6 million contract to extend dump's life

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Calaveras County is moving ahead with plans to spend \$9.6 million to expand the Rock Creek Landfill.

The county's Board of Supervisors recently voted 5-0 to award a contract not to exceed \$9,575,520 to Ford Construction, Inc. for the project.

The current trash collection cell at the landfill is nearing capacity and the new cell is projected to handle the county's waste disposal needs for the next 25-plus years.

The board at its March 28 meeting heard an option proposed by Cal-Waste Recovery Systems that would avoid spending the \$9.6 million to expand the landfill.

Dave Vaccarezza, Cal-Waste Recovery Systems chief executive officer and owner, said his company could collect all of the county's waste at its transfer facility in Toyon and ship it to the Forward Landfill in Manteca for \$115 a ton.

The county, according to a recent third party analysis, is spending about \$185 a ton to bury waste at Rock Creek Landfill.

The county landfill is operating at a deficit and a study to address those issues is expected to be completed this month and come to the board for consideration.

Cal-Waste has the county contract for collection services and already takes nearly 50 percent of the county's trash to the landfill in Manteca. The company back in 2016 made an agreement with the county to avoid using the Rock Creek Landfill for trash disposal so that would extend the life of the current collection cell for several years.

Cal-Waste suggested the board should at least delay awarding of the contract by a month or 100 days to gather more information and study other options.

Before the unanimous vote to enter the \$9.6 million contract with Ford Construction, three of the county's supervisors voiced their support for maintaining a full operational, county-run landfill.

District 5 Supervisor Benjamin Stopper said residents in the early 1990s supported the plan of paying the \$150-a-year parcel fee to maintain a county-operated landfill.

"I personally feel from my perspective we still have the obligation that the people voted on and its important for us to continue that", Stopper said.

In conversation with people in Tuolumne County, they say it was a mistake to close their landfill, he added. "They'll never be able to get that back."

He was against any delay of the decision because it "puts us behind the ball in getting the cell done in time and we have the money to do it."

Plans call for the new cell to be completed by 2025. Money for the contract will be paid over the course of two fiscal years from the Solid Waste Capital Improvement Fund and the County Capital Fund.

"I'm in support of this because I think this is an asset for the county," said District 2 Supervisor Jack Garamendi. "We have to approach our assets thinking about our grandchildren. There's a long history in this county doing penny wise and pound foolish things because we might be in a pinch. This goes to dams, this goes to trails, this goes to railroad tracks, things that we should have kept as a public good. We punted because it might have been difficult and we never get those things back.

"At the end of the day I don't want to find us without that asset (the landfill) anymore," said District Four Supervisor Amanda Folendorf.