

# HOME & GARDEN

## Councillors Visit N-Viro Bio-Solids Processing Plant.



By Maurice Rees

Early in March Colchester councillors decided to visit the N-Viro biosolids processing plant in Aerotech Business Park at the Halifax airport to learn more about the safety of biosolids, since hundreds of truckloads have been dumped on newly cleared land off Crowe's Mill Road. Area residents raised concerns with area councillor, Doug MacInnes, who brought the matter to council committee on February 11th.

At the committee meeting councillors decided Ms. Lise LeBlanc of LP Consulting Services be invited to make a presentation to Council on the topic of Biosolids; and that a copy of the invitation be extended to the local Department of Environment. She replied it would be more beneficial if council was able to tour the plant, and receive a presentation.

Agreeing with her rationale, council chartered bus and invited residents from Crowe's Mills and Lower Truro areas to participate in the tour. This reporter was also able to participate.

The matter of biosolids arose this winter, because hundreds of acres have been cleared and will be turned into a new dairy operation comprising upwards of 2,000 acres in total. Last fall, the farmer brought in hundreds of truckloads with the intent of applying to the newly cleared land to enrich the soil. Area residents concerned about the affects biosolids will have on their quality of life and water source.

Following a tour of the plant, which was established in 2007 to process biosolids from HRM, and is operated on behalf of the municipality by Walker Environmental, which operates several similar facilities in other provinces. The facility is operating at 80% capacity turning out 35,000 tonnes per year.

In the first stage of the process biosolids, via a conveyor enter a mixer where lime and other benign materials are added. At this point the sludge directly from sewer treatment plants is 45% solids and the remainder is water.

After the mixer, the material enters a revolving burner, where it is processed at temperatures ranging from 380-800 degrees. Within 12 hours it is ready to be transferred to the storage area. During the presentations, councillors and residents learned, the material is marketed as N-Rich Soil Amendment. It can not be used for any applications such as gar-

dens or acreage for field crops of vegetables, etc.

The biosolids undergoes several tests throughout the process. In the end it exceeds all regulations established by USEPA; CCME, and all provincial regulations. Samples are taken from the mixer on a daily basis, plus additional testing every 1,000 tonnes. Testing is conducted for pathogens, heavy metals, fecal coliform and results far exceeds regulated levels. All testing is done by in third party labs.

In her detailed presentation, Ms LeBlanc stated processed bio-solid - "N-Rich Soil Amendment" is available only to farmers. In order to get any of the bio-solids, farmers must have a Land Application Program in place, which tests soil before application, then application rates are determined and monitored in following years.

In reality, council has no jurisdiction over the application to land as it is permitted through the provincial and federal governments. However, for their own knowledge level and to increase the comfort level of area residents council is expected to seek presentations from other qualified experts, who are not connected with any bio-solid processing facilities.



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