



**TESTIMONY OF DONALD STEIN
BARKHAMSTED FIRST SELECTMAN
CHAIRMAN, MIRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS
and
RICHARD BARLOW
FORMER FIRST SELECTMAN OF CANTON
FORMER DEEP WASTE MANAGEMENT BUREAU CHIEF
VICE CHAIRMAN, MIRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Chairman Cohen, Chairman Demicco, Ranking Members Miner and Harding, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this morning in testify with regard to Governor's Bill No. 11.

My name is Don Stein. I am First Selectman in the Town of Barkhamsted, Chairman of the Northwest Hills Council of Governments, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Council of Small Towns. I have been on the MIRA Board for over 10 years and was appointed to serve as Chairman about 8 years ago. Also with me is Dick Barlow, former First Selectman of Canton and former DEEP Waste Management Bureau Chief, and Tom Kirk, President and CEO of MIRA.

As you know MIRA is the quasi-public organization charged with executing CT public policy for environmentally sound solid waste disposal to the economic benefit of Connecticut. Specifically, we serve the residents, businesses, and municipalities, providing efficient solid waste disposal and recycling services to our member municipalities and private customers across the state. We have long term contracts with 51 Municipalities and provide service to scores of private haulers. Our facility provides critical waste disposal and recycling needs for approximately 1/3 of the State, and as a quasi-public agency that operates at net cost of operation, we help set the economical pricing structure for the entire state.



For the past 30 plus years, MIRA has managed tens of millions of tons of unrecycled or unrecyclable waste, converting it into clean renewable clean energy that displaces dirtier fossil fuel power. We have processed, marketed and sold for remanufacture countless tons of metals and recyclables. We attempt to insure that the critical infrastructure is both affordable and available to safely manage our waste. Our mission critical to residents, business, and most importantly, municipalities across the state.

As part of our public responsibility and through a statutory process designed and directed by the legislature 5 years ago, MIRA has been working closely with DEEP in planning and providing for the next generation of environmentally sound waste disposal. This comprehensive process was created by Public Act 14-94, and was executed by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and supported by MIRA, in a thorough, extensive and comprehensive manner.

However, the economics of the proposed redevelopment of the MIRA facility are currently not viable, without some combination of public financing, Renewable Energy Credits or a power purchase agreement at a rate 3-4 times higher than the current market price for the electricity generated at the waste-to-energy facility. Without this support, the cost of disposal is likely to go up by \$50-60 per ton, which would then result in the current customer base not agreeing to the next generation contract. They would then look for a more economical approach (railroad cars or trucks going to the Midwest) that is counter to sound environmental policy.

Ignoring the economics, the process identified a viable path forward to insure Connecticut maintains its progressive environmental leadership in waste management. The competitive process examined and explored public and private options for managing our waste, and yielded a technical solution that insures continued efficient and effective waste management and improved recycling and diversion.



Governor's Bill 11, though well intentioned, seeks to ask again the question public Act 14-94 has already answered. It would postpone desperately needed action to implement a competitively developed and comprehensive solution. While there are many technologies and approaches to dealing with solid waste and recyclables, there is no path forward that is totally proven that would negate the need for the facility owned and managed by MIRA, at least in the near future. Therefore, the aging plant must be rebuilt and refurbished now, or there will be a need to begin shipping waste out-of-state to landfills in the Midwest. This would be totally contradictory to the State's current policy and the desire to maintain our environmental leadership.

Most concerning however is the fact that Bill 11's postponement of this necessary affirmative decision now, is in fact, a decision to ignore the results of the Legislators' comprehensive process: the renovation of MIRA's the publicly-owned infrastructure in Harford. Governor's Bill 11's requirement for a new 5-year plan is an attempt to search for alternative solution and would dictate a decision by default.

The simple fact is that the MIRA facilities require immediate capital infusion to continue managing the waste from our municipal members and other customers. The facility cannot continue to reliably operate without immediate capital investment. The Process implemented by the general Assembly in PA 14-94 has provided the roadmap and means to maintain this critical public infrastructure and avoid the giant step backwards to rely on out of State landfills which Connecticut rightly rejected decades ago.

MIRA has proposed to the Assembly five (5) different bills, any of which would provide the means and method of reinvesting in our publicly owned infrastructure. It is a solution supported by our Customer towns and insures our state another 30 years of reliable capacity. It is the solution the legislature searched for and found through Public Act 14-94.



An important point to remember is that if the massive tipping fee increase were to result, the mill rate or fee rate increase would not be borne by the towns, but would be passed through to the homeowners and businesses as a direct tax increase.

MIRA's responsibility is to insure the Cities and towns of Connecticut adequate capacity to manage our waste. Accordingly, MIRA's responsibility is clear. If the state determines it is unable to facilitate investment in the South Meadows facility, MIRA must insure that alternative capacity is available. We will insure availability with the unfortunate, but necessary development of the infrastructure to transport thousands of tons of waste to western and southern landfills. This would follow the managed shutdown of the South Meadows Trash to Energy facility. That shutdown will occur on or before July 2023.

In summary, there are 5 points MIRA would offer to the committee for consideration:

- 1: Connecticut's long standing policy as detailed in the statutorily mandated Solid Waste Management Plan provides for self-sufficiency in waste disposal and recycling.
- 2: A public facility is important to insure cost effective options to municipalities and residents.
- 3: Public Act 14-94, which MIRA has been implementing, identified the path forward for Connecticut for future Connecticut waste management.
- 4: Cost of tipping fees is a critical concern to all, especially municipalities. Towns will, out of fiscal necessity, choose the most economic disposal.
- 5: CT does not have the luxury of time. The decision must be made now to either renovate the facility or take a giant step backwards and return to digging holes to bury our waste.



In conclusion, please know that MIRA is well-prepared and anxious to move on with the facility renovation, and we request that the General Assembly assist MIRA in the renovation of the South Meadows Facility.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.