

Truman drama teachers inspire new NBC series **Life, D1**

Derby winner Always Dreaming has local ties **Sports, C1**

Financial Planning Proudly Spanning 2 Generations!

AP Anthony Petsis & Associates 215.968.6638 | apetsis.com



Save \$373.60 in coupons

BUCKS COUNTY Courier Times

\$2.00 SUNDAY, MAY 7, 2017

BUCKSCOUNTYCOURIERTIMES.COM

@COURIERTIMES

FACEBOOK.COM/BUCKSCOURIERTIMES



CALKINS ARCHIVE
(File) A portion of the U.S. Steel property in Falls, as seen March 3, 1992.



The shift from industry's long-term effects

KYLE BAGENSTOSE / STAFF
Waste Management opened the Wheelabrator Incinerator in Falls in 1994. It sold the property to Texas-based Energy Capital Partners in 2014. The facility burns about a half-million tons of garbage each year.

From industry to trash

Waste disposal grew as industry declined, while concerns about hazards persist



CHLOE ELMER / PHOTOJOURNALIST

Tom Smith, a filmmaker from Falls, always has his camera at the ready. Here, he's seen in Williamson Park in Morrisville, where he talked with this news organization about local pollution.

By KYLE BAGENSTOSE
STAFF WRITER

Day 1 of a 4-day series

On Nov. 23, 1916, the Bristol Daily Courier reported on the arrival of mysterious men to a farm south of Bristol Borough.

"The Schaffer farm has been visited several times by strangers," the newspaper reported. "One of these visitors gave his name as Mr. Haas, of Haverford."

With a little more sleuthing, the Daily Courier determined the nature of the visits: Mr. Otto Haas was part owner of a Philadelphia chemical company named Rohm and Haas, and he was prospecting for land for what would eventually become a massive plant.

The very next day, the paper reported a dye operation would also open in the borough.

"An industrial boom appears to have struck Bristol," the article concluded.

What the paper couldn't have predicted then was just how big that boom would become for Lower Bucks County.

On Jan. 14, 1948, came the report of another major arrival. The Minnesota Mining & Manufacturing Co., or 3M, paid \$861,000 for the Fleetwings Plant in Bristol Township. The plant would convert operations: Instead of making aircraft parts for the military, a peak workforce of 600 people would use industrial chemicals to make products such as Scotch tape.

Larger still was the arrival in Falls of U.S. Steel's Fairless Works in 1952. Within two decades, the operation grew to 4,000 acres and employed a peak workforce of 10,000 people.

But nowhere along the way did any reports predict what would happen when those industries went bust.

"When you have something like the steel mill that is just the force of our entire economy, and it goes away ... what do you do?" 26-year-old Falls resident

Barrier\$ to Betterment

An occasional series on how income affects our lives

The environment

Sunday, Day 1: From heavy industry to waste disposal in Lower Bucks. Falls and Waste Management talk about the landfills.

Monday, Day 2: Exposure to pollution along the Delaware River.

Tuesday, Day 3: Respiratory risks; unproven causes.

Wednesday, Day 4: Possible solutions to prevent pollution.

Tom Smith asked.

Over the past year, Smith has been making "Waste Bucks," a documentary film about pollution in Lower Bucks that will be shown at the Newtown Theatre on May 18. In Smith's opinion, Falls and nearby towns have been "scrounging" since the mill's closure: residents looking for whatever work they could find and townships turning to the waste industry to replace lost revenue.

Smith said the film project followed a personal awakening to the hazards of air pollution, and he pins much of his concerns on the area's municipal waste facilities, industrial sites and traffic.

"Regardless of how well I live my life, how healthy I live my life, I lived next to a waste incinerator for 26 years," Smith said. "What legacy have I been stuck with due to the decisions of others?"

See **TRASH**, Page **A8**

Falls, Waste Management offer different perspective on landfills, **A9**



Residents bracing for discussions on Snipes Tract athletics fields

By THOMAS FRIESTAD
STAFF WRITER

Last time Lower Makefield residents gathered to hash out how the Snipes athletics fields would be built, the township's planning commission had to adjourn the December meeting early.

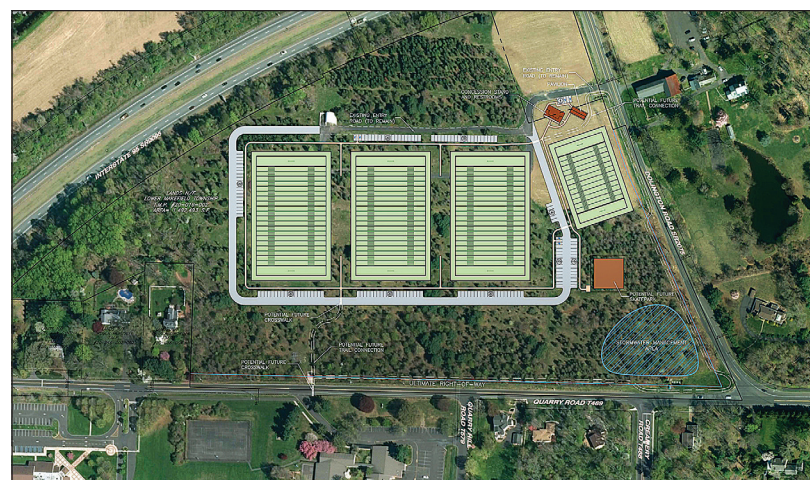
As Supervisor David Fritchey puts it, the public discussion "unfortunately devolved into a certain amount of incredible disorder."

Five months later, the project plans are resurfacing for review at the planning commission's 7:30 p.m. Monday meeting. But for some residents, time hasn't alleviated their concerns over some project components.

Chris Gray Faust lives across the street from the 33-acre Snipes Tract on Dolington Road. She and her husband, Don, have followed the project's progress since last fall, concerned that construction would result in problems for their property.

Namely, there's a drainage culvert on their property that they're worried could overflow if township engineers aren't careful — and Gray Faust says engineers might have erred in the past when studying adjustments to Sandy Run Road, which now has line-of-sight issues the township is fixing to the tune of \$1.5 million.

"If they're wrong on their See **FIELDS**, Page **A2**



CONTRIBUTED

The Snipes Tract sketch plan and the Walkability Study have both been posted on the Lower Makefield Township website.

56° Cool with clouds,
38° showers late. **B3**

INDEX
Editorial A20
Advice D5 Lotteries A2
Auto G1 Money A18
Classified G5 Obituaries . B4-6
Comics..... inside Puzzles G4
Community .. B1 TV D5



UNLOCK *the* POTENTIAL *in your Home*

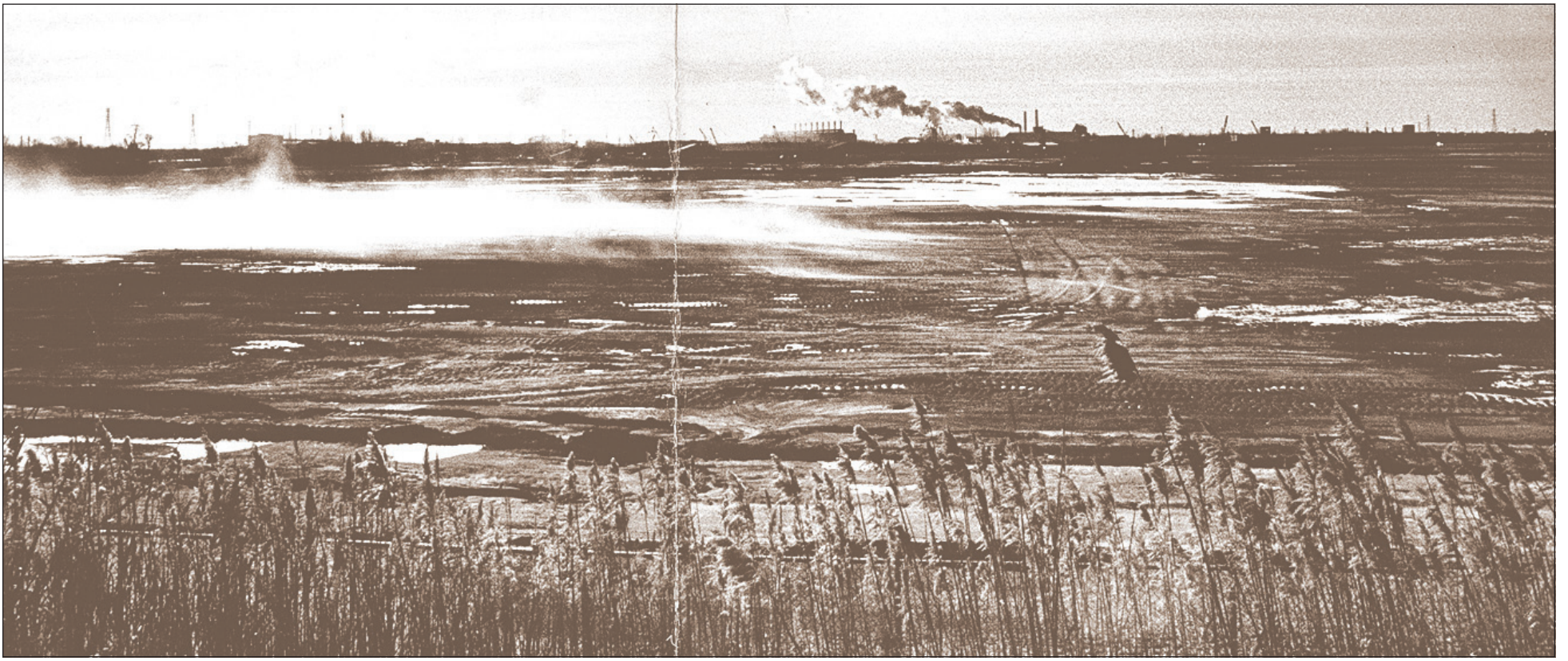
With a Home Equity Loan from *The First* the possibilities are endless!

THE *First* NATIONAL BANK
& TRUST CO. OF NEWTOWN

Member FDIC

Visit www.fnbn.com for details and to apply online, or stop by one of our 12 offices today. *The First Has Money to Lend!*





(File) The U.S. Steel property in Falls, as seen from Tyburn Road near the intersection with South Pennsylvania Avenue on Jan. 15, 1975. The white cloud (left center) is wind-blown dust. The "vast cleared area will be industrial development," reads the photo caption.

CALKINS ARCHIVE

Trash

Continued from Page A1

Bristol Borough resident John Foley offers a longer perspective. A 68-year-old Levittown native, he's lived his whole life alongside industry in Lower Bucks. He remembers when the land formerly occupied by U.S. Steel was just farmland. "Corn, eggs, plants, all kinds of stuff," Foley said.

He also remembers people flocking to Levittown from the Pocono region, looking for work and finding U.S. Steel.

But Foley says the air and water seems much cleaner these days than in the heyday of U.S. Steel and other heavy industry. He remembers the remnants of red ore that blanketed cars in neighborhoods near U.S. Steel, where he worked in the mill for a few years in the 1960s.

"I got out of that," Foley said. "I didn't want to die. It was a nasty job."

Emissions still present

There's no doubt factory emissions in Bucks have decreased along with the number of factories.

In 1986, the EPA established a database called the Toxic Release Inventory, or TRI, which "tracks the management of certain toxic chemicals that may pose a threat to human health and the environment." The program requires many U.S. factories to report annually on the total weight of the toxic chemicals they produce, and also how they get rid of that waste — whether it's recycled; shipped off-site; or released into the environment.

In 1990, the year before U.S. Steel ended steel-making operations at its Fairless Hills plant, the Associated Press news service used the TRI to report the plant was the state's top polluter, annually emitting nearly 8 million pounds of toxic materials into the air, water and land. 3M was fourth in the state, releasing 2.3 million pounds of toxic materials.

"It points out that we have to do business very differently in this county," then-Bucks County Congressman Peter Kostmayer was quoted as saying.

Kostmayer got his wish: By



John Foley, at his Bristol Borough home with his dog Fiona, talks about the state of the environment.

CHLOE ELMER / PHOTOJOURNALIST

2011, emissions had ceased at U.S. Steel and 3M. By the time Rohm and Haas was purchased by Dow Chemical Co. in 2009, EPA records show its output of toxic chemicals was already on a steep decline.

But that wasn't the end of the story.

The county has 51 facilities tracked on the EPA's toxic index, and that per-mile concentration ranks seventh among Pennsylvania counties. In 2014, the most recent year data was available, those facilities combined to release approximately 118,000 pounds of toxic waste into the air and 5,200 pounds into the water, as well as shipping 21 tons off-site.

The EPA data shows Lower Bucks communities closest to the river are still subject to the most toxic releases.

Four ZIP codes along the Delaware — 19007, 19030, 19020 and 19067 — account for about 80 percent of toxic production in Bucks County.

Most striking is the 19007 ZIP code, which covers all of Bristol Borough and most of Tullytown. Data show approximately 51,000 pounds of toxic materials were released into the environment there in 2014. That's more than 42 percent of the county's total, though 19007 contains just 3 percent of the county's population and 0.3 percent of its land area.

Waste brings 'unprecedented risk'

While toxic emissions have been declining from their peak atop the state rankings, something



ADRIAN SIPES / STAFF

Diane Sicotte, a sociology professor at Drexel University, studies environmental justice. In a book published in 2016, Sicotte concluded that Falls and Bristol Township have among the highest concentrations of waste sites of communities in the Delaware Valley.

else has climbed to the pinnacle: the area's waste industry.

Lower Bucks' first major landfill, the GROWS landfill, was opened in 1970 by The Warner Co. on a 46-acre plot in the southern part of Falls. The landfill was eventually purchased by Waste Management, which began buying up more land from the declining U.S. Steel property to fuel landfill expansions.

In 1988, a 160-acre expansion permit led to the opening of the GROWS North Landfill. The same year, Waste Management opened the neighboring Tullytown Landfill.

In 1994, Waste Management began operating its Wheelabrator waste incinerator in Falls, which burns waste before shipping the residual ash to landfills elsewhere. It sold the facility to Houston-based Energy Capital Partners in 2014.

Together, the GROWS Landfill, the Tullytown Landfill and the Wheelabrator incinerator have grown into the largest cluster of municipal waste sites in Pennsylvania, accounting for 19 percent of all municipal garbage disposed of in the state. The final tally in 2015 was 3.9 million tons of garbage buried or incinerated in a land area of 14 square miles, DEP records show.

To put it in perspective, 1 ton of garbage equals about 115 filled trash bags. If only Bucks County residents contributed to the Falls and Tullytown landfills, every Bucks household would need to generate 35 bags of trash each week to reach the amount of trash disposed of there in 2015.

State records show the vast majority of garbage that arrives

in Lower Bucks comes from New Jersey (40 percent), New York (27 percent), and Philadelphia (16 percent). Just 12 percent originates in Bucks County.

Drexel University sociology professor Diane Sicotte said the accumulation of waste in Falls and Tullytown is part of a transformation that has become common across post-industrial America: a shift from a net "exporter" of waste to a net "importer."

"Waste tends to flow to these 'de-industrialized' towns," Sicotte said, adding that industrial zoning attracts businesses such as landfills and incinerators to land formerly occupied by factories.

For years, Sicotte has scoured public databases and created an "environmental hazard" scoring system to rate the toxic risks faced by the Delaware Valley's more than 300 communities.

In each community, she'd count the number of factories, incinerators and landfills, and award "points" for each. Sicotte tallied the numbers and released the results in her 2016 book, "From Workshop to Waste Magnet: Environmental Inequality in the Philadelphia Region."

Falls topped the list with a score of 165 points, followed by Philadelphia's Bridesburg-Kensington-Port Richmond area. Only seven communities topped 100 points, including Bristol Township, which scored 110 points.

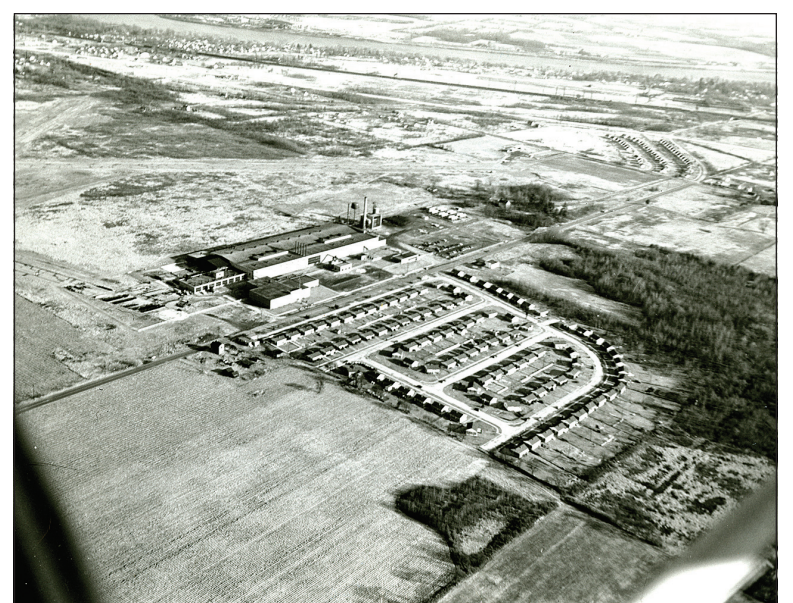
"The people of Falls are living with this concentration of hazards that's unprecedented in Bucks County," Sicotte said.

Kyle Bagenstose: 215-949-4211; email: kbagenstose@calkins.com; Twitter: @KyleBagenstose



CALKINS ARCHIVE

(File) Then-Bucks Congressman Peter Kostmayer (left) talks about a proposed expansion of the Tullytown Landfill with the older GROWS landfill in the background, on Aug. 21, 1992. The expansion occurred; the Tullytown Landfill will close this spring.



CALKINS ARCHIVE

(File) The former 3M plant (known at the time as the Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Co.) is seen from the air, circa 1953. The plant was on Green Lane, near the Pennsylvania Turnpike, in Bristol Township. The adjacent Bloomsdale-Fleetwing neighborhood is one of the area's oldest, and is also now one of the county's lowest-income neighborhoods.

Falls, Waste Management offer different perspective on landfills

By KYLE BAGENSTOSE
STAFF WRITER

Bob Harvie, chairman of the Falls Board of Supervisors, knows the southern part of his township wasn't always a place for steelmaking and landfills. He remembers farms and alfalfa.

"The decision to convert it to (industry) was made and that's not a decision we can change," said Harvie.

After the operations of U.S. Steel declined in the late 20th century, people didn't realize the scope of pollution left behind, Harvie said.

"Just the kinds of remediation you have to do, I think, does not make (the land) financially viable for anything other than some kind of industrial use," he said of the approximately 4,000-acre former footprint of U.S. Steel, much of which is now the tax-free Keystone Industrial Port Complex.

Harvie acknowledges it's possible to focus on attracting light industry to the area — the manufacturing of clothing, electronics or other small consumer goods. But, he called Waste Management Inc., which has owned and operated all of the area's landfills for decades, an "ideal" corporate partner, despite some initial concerns he had when he took office in 2003.

"The more people that I met from Waste (Management), I really came to the conclusion that this was not the sort of stereotypical giant, evil, Fortune 500 company," Harvie said.

Waste Management spokesman John Hambrose said the company strives to be a good neighbor.

"Our team ... is in regular contact with all of our neighbors," Hambrose said, adding that the company also supports local fire departments and cleanup projects.

"We patrol the communities around the landfill every day to (detect) odors," he added. "Particulates, we control by applying water to unpaved areas whenever the weather requires it."

Hambrose said the company spent about \$11 million cleaning the former U.S. Steel property for its new Fairless Landfill, which will employ about 70 people. The company estimates the landfill will bring about \$600 million in total "capital and operating expenditures in the region" during its lifetime.

Waste Management is one of several major industrial companies in Lower Bucks cited in this series looking at heavy industry's local footprint and legacy. We also reached out to U.S. Steel, the Dow Chemical Co., Arkema and Wheelabrator Technologies for comment. U.S. Steel and Wheelabrator declined an interview. Dow accepted an emailed list of questions, but ultimately didn't respond.

Arkema, a chemical and materials company that rents space from Dow in the former Rohm and Haas plant in Bristol Township, wrote that it employs about 130 people there and has contributed more than \$22 million to the local economy in the form of payroll, property taxes and property maintenance. The company also said it invested \$30,000 in local causes, such as the Bristol Riverside Theater, in 2016; hosts educational programs for local schools; and spent \$3.1 million in the past two years on environmental projects at its Bristol Township plant.

Growing revenue

Harvie, along with other Falls leaders, is well aware of the financial impact the waste industry has on his township.

In recent years, Falls received \$4.95 for each ton of trash received at the GROWS and Tullytown landfills. According to the township's 2015 budget, Falls received \$13.5 million in host fees from waste facilities, or 76 percent of its total revenue.

The GROWS North Landfill closed earlier this year, and the Tullytown Landfill is scheduled to follow sometime this spring, according to Waste Management. But the new Fairless Landfill, which opened in Falls last summer, will keep the cash flowing: Falls is supposed to receive \$6.25 for each ton of trash that goes to the landfill for the first three to five years, and \$6.50 each year after that.

Hambrose said it's hard to



Bulldozers compact garbage at the Fairless Landfill at the Waste Management facility in Falls. CHLOE ELMER / PHOTOJOURNALIST

predict how much waste the landfill will get each year because of changing market conditions. However, Township Manager Peter Gray said Falls expects to receive additional host fee funding in 2017 and 2018. The projected 2017 budget, posted to the town's website, estimates \$16.3 million in host fee revenue. That's \$3 million more than the 2015 budget.

Gray said revenues from the landfill have helped the township build tens of millions of dollars in savings, placed into what officials call a reserve fund. The fees have also helped pay for everything from trash collection to playgrounds and sidewalks. And he and Harvie said some of the biggest benefits have been in infrastructure investments: A road program that began in the early 1990s is rebuilding the township's roads from top to bottom. Fees also built a boat ramp whose upkeep is now paid for with user fees.

But just how much more space is there? The Fairless Landfill is 252 acres, which Waste Management estimates will last 13 to 15 years.

Hambrose said Waste Management doesn't "own any land beyond the current Fairless permit area that we could build on. At some point, we've got to find safe, environmentally friendly disposal areas for all of our communities."

While Harvie and Gray said the company hasn't approached them about future landfill plans or expansion, Bucks County property records show there's still more land to be had.

U.S. Steel's largest remaining property spans more than 1,400 acres, much of it unoccupied and located adjacent to the Fairless Landfill. U.S. Steel, which employs 83 workers in a steel-finishing operation there, declined to answer questions for this story, including how much land the company owns that could potentially be sold for landfill use.

Who calls the shots?

Harvie and Gray said any decision to rezone additional sites for landfill use would ultimately be in the hands of the township. But records show Waste Management hasn't always accepted local zoning rules.

Reports in this news organization's archives show that, in 1985, Waste Management sought to expand its GROWS Landfill but was denied a necessary zoning change by Falls. The company sued, with its attorneys arguing that Falls' zoning ordinance was unconstitutional and didn't provide for any property to be used as a landfill.

Ultimately, the case went to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. News reports said the justices sided with Waste Management because they believed Falls' zoning ordinance

was "exclusionary." That ruling cleared the way for the GROWS expansion.

Despite that ruling, Harvie said he believes future zoning authority would lie fully with Falls if Waste Management sued. "It's our decision. ... I don't think there's much of a legal leg (for Waste Management) to stand on," Harvie said.

The 1986 court decision also had repercussions in neighboring Tullytown.

Watching Falls fight it out in court, Tullytown's leadership bowed out of its initial opposition to Waste Management's proposal for what would become the Tullytown Landfill. Kenneth Kugel, then a Bucks County planning commission administrator, advised Tullytown Borough Council in a 1987 meeting that it could cost as much as 15 percent of the borough's annual budget to fight the proposal in court.

"I don't think this is the proper place for a landfill, but I won't vote to waste money," then-council President James Chase said at the time.

Unwilling to fight the landfill, Tullytown built its municipal budget around Waste Management host fees.

According to the township's 2015 budget, Tullytown received approximately \$4.2 million in host fees, or 74 percent of its revenue. Much of that was turned around as a "property improvement allocation," which was essentially a check of about \$4,800 that was sent to each of the borough's 700-some homeowners. The annual checks have been a longtime arrangement in Tullytown, where the median household income is about \$50,000, one of the lowest in Bucks, according to the 2010 census.

The end of an era

Those fees are coming to an end.

Once the Tullytown Landfill closes this spring, the borough is out of potential land and thus, host fees and funding for the annual checks to homeowners. The town's 2017 budget shows an estimated \$200,000 in host fees. That leaves Tullytown with a 2017 budget gap of \$6.9 million, to be paid from the township's savings fund.

In December, Tullytown's new treasurer, Joseph McPadden, said the borough has approximately \$43 million in reserves. If the nearly \$7 million budget gap remains each year, Tullytown will deplete that fund by 2024.

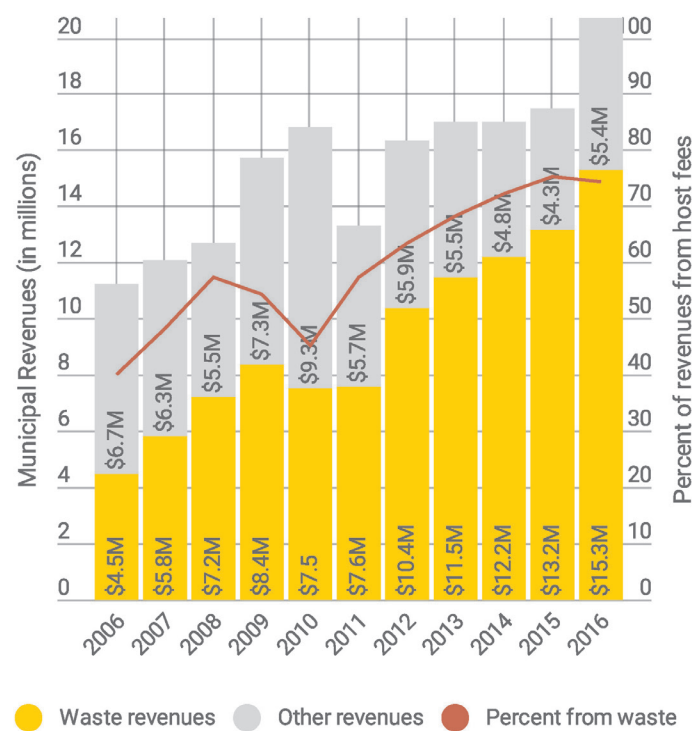
Late last year, this news organization contacted Tullytown borough coordinator Alison Smith to request an interview with her or the borough's council members to discuss the issue. Smith said via phone she would pass along the request to the full board. None of the town's leaders have responded.

Kyle Bagenstose: 215-949-4211; email: kbagenstose@calkins.com; Twitter: @KyleBagenstose

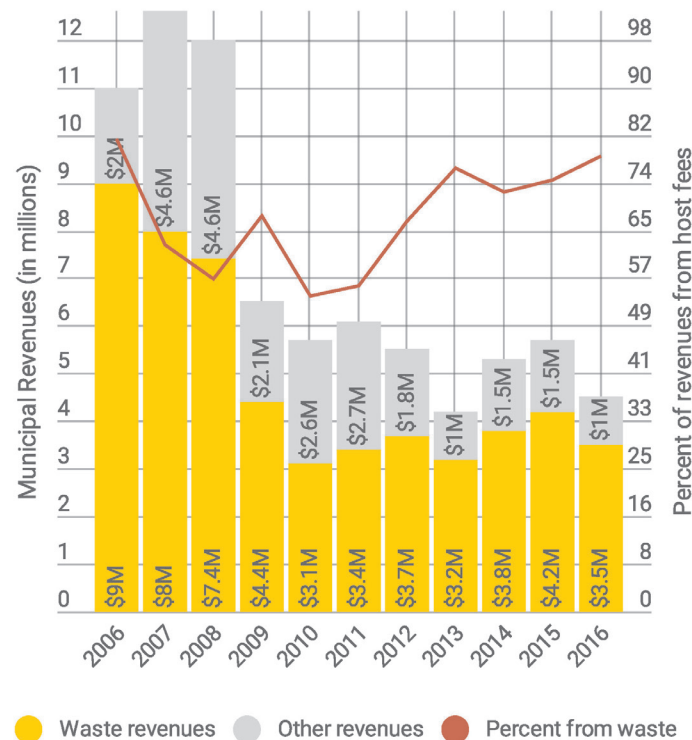
Making money from trash

Since 2007, Falls and Tullytown have increasingly used landfill host fees to balance their budgets. As of 2016, about 75% of each town's revenues came from the host fees.

Falls



Tullytown



Sources: Budget information as listed on Falls, Tullytown and Pennsylvania websites.