Torrington and Wheelabrator

Check the contract

By Charlene LaVoie

WINSTED

IT IS ironic that New Hartford lamented the loss of the compost facility in the June 13 Register Citizen article. New Hartford should be thankful that they will not be dealing with IPS and its new parent, Wheelabrator Technologies Inc.

The age old process of composting mixes dry waste like tree stumps, leaves and grass clippings with organic wet material like sewer sludge and lets it sit a while until it becomes a dry mulch. Composting is environmentally and economically sound. Doing business with Wheelabrator is not.

IPS, a Connecticut-grown company with sound environmental goals, decided to make composting technology — adaptable to community needs — available on a large scale and provided communities with the guidance to build and operate composting facilities.

Unfortunately Wheelabrator Technologies Inc. purchased IPS earlier this year. Wheelabrator Technologies Inc., owned by Waste Management Inc., is the largest waste-management business in the country. IPS is gone. What exists is a company notorious for making deals advantageous to it but which poses financial and environmental problems for the host community.

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Before the Wheelabrator takeover, IPS assisted Fairfield, a town of 50,000, in building a 6-bay compost facility which is owned and operated exclusively by the town. Fairfield had several problems to address: exorbitant tipping fees to dispose of their sewer sludge and no space in their landfill to dispose of tree stumps, leaves and other yard waste. With the town owned-and-operated compost facility there are no more tipping fees, a use for yard waste and plenty of compost to cover their landfill and sell for profit.

IPS was not large enough to own and operate each community facility, rather the goal was to provide the technology to communities. Fairfield officials indicate that they are extremely satisfied with the decision to own and operate the facility. Neighboring towns and companies are now willing to pay Fairfield to process their sludge and organic trash. This will not be the case in Torrington.

Torrington is about to make a deal with Wheelabrator which will make the company the owner/operator of a 12-bay compost facility. Fairfield's 6 bays are plenty for a town of 50,000; 12 bays presumably can handle material from 100,000. Torrington will have no control over the tipping fees, the types of materials brought into the facility or the type of material sent out.