

Questions remain on waste sites

New Hartford residents attend meeting about landfills

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NEW HARTFORD — New Hartford residents last night received few answers to questions about two suspected hazardous waste sites in the town.

About 20 of the 135 people who attended the public information meeting at the New Hartford High School questioned representatives of the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Oneida County Health Department about concerns ranging from health risks to effects on property value. But officials said they could not answer many questions because more testing is needed.

DEC has placed the Scully landfill off Valley View Road and the New Hartford village dump off Chenango Road on its list of inactive hazardous waste sites.

Kathleen Zwolinski of 1914

Valley View Road asked whether she could plant a garden on her property, since she lived several hundred feet away from the Sylvan Glen Creek and Scully dump. But she said after the 1½-hour meeting she wasn't satisfied.

"They answered no questions because they don't know anything," her husband, Steve Zwolinski said. "It's not their fault."

Oneida County Health Commissioner William Campbell, whose job it was to answer Zwolinski's health-related questions, said it's too early to assess the health risks posed by the two dumps. Since the DEC still must conduct tests on both sites, Campbell said it is difficult to determine the health risks posed by them.

However, the health department is taking precautions, he said. It is testing wells of residents who live near Scully and the dump

near Chenango Road. Thus far, the health department tested wells at eight homes near the sites, but found no contaminants, Nicholas DeRosa of the county health department said.

Campbell said the department will continue to monitor wells. Also, he said his department will look into whether signs are needed to designate the dumps as hazardous waste sites.

Walter Demick, a DEC's associate sanitary engineer from Albany, said the two dumps are still in the suspected category.

"There's an allegation there is waste there (at the sites) but it has not proven to be true yet," DEC plans a more detailed study of the air, groundwater, surface water and soil at the sites.

Demick said a contract for cleanup of the sites, if needed, probably won't be awarded until the fall.