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News Release – For Immediate Release

Board of Health Approves Soil Testing at WIN Waste

(Oct. 29, 2026) -- The Seneca County Board of Health has voted to approve soil sampling and laboratory testing at WIN Waste Innovations of Seneca County. The emergency action comes after the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officially declined to require WIN Waste to perform the laboratory analysis, breaking a previous commitment to verify that no hazardous contamination remains at the site.

The independent sampling will take place at an area currently being excavated to relocate waste for the landfill's expansion project. More than 41 of an anticipated 162, five-foot-deep test pits have been dug to visually check for any residual waste, but the state agency has refused to require the landfill to conduct chemical laboratory analysis. Instead, Ohio EPA has been relying strictly on visual inspections to declare the soil is clean.

"This is a question about whether residual benzene, cyanide, and heavy metals are being permanently sealed beneath structural backfill," said Seneca County Health Commissioner Julie Richards. "Right now, the EPA is relying solely on a visual inspection of the excavation bottom, and that's just not an adequate testing method to ensure our residents are safe."

According to Ohio EPA historical records, benzene, a confirmed human carcinogen, was disposed of at the landfill in the 1980s. Richards emphasized that both benzene and dissolved cyanide are colorless, odorless, and entirely invisible to the naked eye in contaminated soil, making laboratory testing the only viable method to confirm public safety.

The Ohio EPA had previously mentioned in response to comments during the landfill's Permit to Install process that the solid waste permit requires confirmatory test pits to "verify that no waste or other contamination remains." Richards attempted to address these gaps directly with state regulators, sending a formal letter to the Ohio EPA on October 14 to detail the health district's urgent concerns and invite agency representatives to the October board meeting to answer questions. The Ohio EPA did not address the concerns or attend the October 22 meeting to provide any response. However, on October 28, Ohio EPA staff confirmed to Seneca County General Health District employees that they would not require WIN Waste to perform lab analysis of soil.

The Seneca County Board of Health is stepping in immediately to fill the regulatory gap.

"To protect the citizens, it's our job to perform testing, regardless of how the EPA or WIN Waste feels about it," said Seneca County Board of Health Member Bob Podach.

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