



# Despite calls for public vote, Lane continues with food waste diversion project

KLCC | By [Rebecca Hansen-White](#)

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*Rebecca Hansen-White/KLCC*

The plastic sheeting is an open landfill "cell" that will eventually be filled with Lane County residents' garbage. Officials say the green hill behind the open plastic cell is less than one generation's trash. Future landfill cells will be less steep because of risk from earthquakes.

Lane County Commissioners voted Tuesday to finance a planned waste processing facility.

The project, known as IMEDF or Clean Lane, will divert methane-producing food

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natural gas the county, or others, can use as fuel.

During Tuesday's board meeting, commissioners considered the project's funding and several updates to its contract with Bulk Handling Systems, the private company that will finance and operate part of the facility.

Lane County has raised garbage rates to cover their share, a move several trash haulers and customers have criticized including Sanipac District Manager Chris Kjar.

During Tuesday's meeting he asked commissioners to send the project to voters instead of moving it to the next stage of the process.

"If it lives up to its promises, then great," he said. "If (it has) issues and problems, at least the people have made their choice. ... That way public trust in recycling can be maintained, which is the real legacy we want to leave for our children."

Ahead of Tuesday's meeting both Sanipac and Apex recycling appealed directly to their customers - asking them to oppose the project.

Citing public concern, both Commissioners David Loveall and Ryan Ceniga pushed for the project to be decided by voters.

"I don't know how in good conscience we can't at this point," Ceniga said.

Several board members at the Emerald People's Utility District also raised concerns - saying the utility is already collecting methane from Lane County's landfill. They argued diverting methane-producing food waste away from the landfill would reduce the amount of electricity they're able to generate, impacting their customers.

In a presentation Tuesday, Public Works Director Dan Hurley said EPUD has captured and diverted a fair amount of greenhouse gasses, but there are still significant emissions leaking into the atmosphere.

The project does have its supporters, including the Eugene Chamber of Commerce, who argued it was an innovative opportunity to address climate change and add jobs.

During Tuesday's meeting Beyond Toxics Director Lisa Arkin also expressed support

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on landfills.

“Landfills are our third largest emitter of greenhouse gasses,” she said. “This project will reduce our contribution to climate change.”

Commissioner Health Buch said the county’s getting a good deal - a significant private investment, a tax credit and extending the life of their landfill.

“The fiscal implications of saving millions and millions of dollars makes this a slam dunk,” she said.

The county’s share of the project is roughly \$35 million dollars. Bulk Handling Systems will cover the \$100 million in equipment costs. The remaining \$15 million will be covered with a tax credit.

In a 3 to 2 vote, Commissioners decided to continue on schedule. Clean Lane is set to open at the end of next year.

The project, known as I-MERF or Clean Lane, will divert food waste from the landfill to the new facility, reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

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**Rebecca Hansen-White**

Rebecca Hansen-White joined the KLCC News Department in November, 2023. Her journalism career has included stops at Spokane Public Radio, The Spokesman-Review, and The Columbia Basin Herald.

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