

\$869 Million To Deal With West Covina's BKK Landfill

By Brian Jobst

Recently the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) announced the preliminary price tag for remediating the BKK hazardous waste landfill in West Covina. The preliminary cost estimate is \$869,286,436.

The landfill, located near the corner of Azusa Avenue and Amar Road is California's largest toxic hazardous waste landfill, covering nearly 200 acres of land and up to 595 feet deep. It contains 5.18 million tons of hazardous waste such as acids, arsenic, cyanide, mercury, and vinyl chloride most of which was liquids applied directly to or injected into the ground.

Both the DTSC and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency describe remediation as the implementation of a "final protective remedy" for a contaminated site. The Potential Responsible Parties, those that disposed of hazardous waste at BKK would

bear the \$869 million cost.

West Covina Councilman Tony Wu has led the effort for a 400-room hotel directly adjacent to the unlined landfill, indicating the land at BKK is "just dirt" and ready for development. To date, sitting Council members Wu, Letty Lopez-Viado, and Dario Castellanos have voted in favor of Council resolutions associated with selling the land to hotel developer Singpoli prior to remediation of the hazardous waste landfill at BKK.

The city of West Covina had been working with the Singpoli Group LLC on developing the hotel. That effort appears to have temporarily stalled. Singpoli's Hotel Constance declared bankruptcy in February of 2021. However, two months ago Singpoli began revisiting the BKK site along with investors in an effort to again pursue what some West Covina and Walnut residents refer to as the "Landfill Hotel".

Livable West Covina, a local civic group focused on public health and safety at and around BKK has repeatedly asked the West Covina's City Council and senior City Staff to allow the landfill to be remediated before initiating efforts at intensive development at BKK like a hotel. Livable West Covina also continues to press the City to fulfill its own public health and environmental commitments at BKK, ones made to regulators years ago.

The DTSC indicates that prior to initiating the remediation work at BKK, two studies that are underway must be completed, both of which will provide insight into the "final remedy" for the site.

Mr. Jobst is a 33-year resident of West Covina and co-founder of Livable West Covina, a civic group focused on protecting public health associated with the landfills at BKK
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