To the Town Board of Gardiner,

I am writing to formally express my support for the installation of an electric fence at the Gardiner Transfer Station. Given the persistent presence of a bear in the woods adjacent to the station, this installation is a necessary and responsible step for the safety of our community and the well-being of the animal.

My support is based on several critical observations and expert recommendations:

1. Promoting the Health of Local Wildlife

While bears are a natural part of our ecosystem, habituating them to human refuse is detrimental. According to Dan Scharf, transfer station attendant, there has been a visible decline in the bear's health since it took up residence in the Spring of 2025. Initial observations showed signs of a healthy diet, but by late summer, the bear's scat contained plastic debris and indicated digestive distress. By allowing the bear easy access to dumpsters, we are effectively "training" it to abandon natural foraging and exercise in favor of an unhealthy, localized food source.

2. Public Health and Environmental Impact

The bear frequently drags bags of refuse into the adjacent park area, creating significant sanitary concerns. On Saturday, May 5th, more than 20 volunteers spent the morning cleaning up debris scattered by the bear, which included food waste, diapers, syringes, and feminine hygiene products. This level of pollution in a public space is unsustainable and poses a direct risk to the residents who use the park.

3. Operational Efficiency

The daily task of cleaning up scattered garbage on the driveway and station property currently falls to the station attendant. This is a time-consuming burden that should not be a permanent part of his daily duties. An electric fence would provide a proactive solution, allowing staff to focus on essential station operations.

4. Expert Recommendations and Proven Ineffectiveness of Alternatives

Wildlife specialists from the DEC have assessed the situation and specifically recommended an electric fence over other methods. Current data and local experience show that:

- Relocation is ineffective: The DEC no longer removes nuisance bears because they are known to travel long distances to return to their home territory.
- Chemical deterrents fail:** Attempts to use bleach or ammonia have already proven unsuccessful.

- Scent-based deterrents are counterproductive:** According to **BearWise®*, pepper spray can actually act as an attractant once the scent mellows.

For the benefit of both the Gardiner community and the bear, a fence is the most humane and effective option. John Milo, a DEC Bear Biologist, has already provided the town with a framework for best practices regarding this installation. This is a clear case where a "good fence makes for better neighbors."

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to keeping Gardiner safe and environmentally sound.

Sincerely,

Holly Shader
Climate Smart Gardiner task force member