

[MUNICIPALITY]
DELAWARE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION OF [MUNICIPALITY], DELAWARE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, ADOPTING THE ZERO WASTE HIERARCHY AND URGING COUNTY-WIDE TRANSITION TO ZERO WASTE

WHEREAS, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (“DEP”) reported that in 2020 Delaware County sent 380,123 tons of waste, which includes trash from [municipality], to be burned at the Covanta Delaware Valley trash incinerator (“Covanta incinerator”) located in the City of Chester;¹ and

WHEREAS, the Covanta incinerator burns up to 3,510 tons of waste each day making it the largest incinerator in the country and one of the largest in the world; and²

WHEREAS, the Covanta Delaware Valley trash incinerator (“Covanta incinerator”) is number one in Delaware County for toxic mercury emissions, and the county’s largest industrial source of nitrogen oxide pollution; and³

WHEREAS, nitrogen oxide pollution has been linked to asthma attacks. The childhood asthma hospitalization rate in Delaware County is 22% above the state average, and the rate in Chester City, where the Covanta incinerator is located, is nearly three times the state average; and⁴

WHEREAS, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”), 42% of greenhouse gases produced in the country are from our management of materials, in the provision of goods and food. Much of this can be reduced by sound local policies relating to how we manage consumption and discarded materials; and⁵

WHEREAS, many environmental problems, namely the production of greenhouse gases, are caused by waste and inefficiency caused by how we produce, distribute, and consume products. As a result, the [body] of [municipality] finds that Zero Waste is an important policy goal for the sake of health, environmental justice, a stable climate, job creation, and a sustainable economy for the residents of [municipality]; and

¹ http://cedatareporting.pa.gov/reports/powerbi/Public/DEP/WM/PBI/Solid_Waste_Disposal_Information

² <http://www.energyjustice.net/incineration/usplants>; <http://energyrecoverycouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ERC-2018-directory.pdf>; <https://www.covanta.com/where-we-are/our-facilities/delaware-valley>

³ http://cedatareporting.pa.gov/reports/powerbi/Public/DEP/AQ/PBI/Air_Emissions_Report

⁴ PA Department of Health, 2010. <http://www.ejnet.org/chester/asthma.html>

⁵ <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/documents/ghg-land-materials-management.pdf>

WHEREAS, the Zero Waste International Alliance defines Zero Waste as “the conservation of all resources by means of responsible production, consumption, reuse, and recovery of products, packaging, and materials without burning and with no discharges to land, water, or air that threaten the environment or human health;” and⁶

WHEREAS, Waste incineration, waste-to-fuels schemes, and waste deregulation are considered unacceptable in a Zero Waste system; and

WHEREAS, Zero Waste provides a Zero Waste Hierarchy, from highest to lowest priority, governed by seeking the highest and best use of materials: Rethink/Redesign; Reduce; Reuse; Recycle/Compost; Material Recovery; Biological Treatment; and Stabilized Landfilling; and⁷

WHEREAS, waste incineration is the most expensive and polluting way to manage waste or to make energy.⁸ To make the same amount of energy, trash incineration is more polluting than burning coal.⁹ Per ton of waste disposed, incineration is more harmful than directly using landfills, and releases more greenhouse gases, acid gases, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, and toxic pollution, even if extensive trucking is needed to reach landfills.¹⁰

WHEREAS, incineration does not turn waste into energy, and does not avoid landfills. For every 100 tons burned, about 30 tons become toxic ash that must be landfilled, resulting in a smaller, but more toxic, landfill. The other 70 tons become air pollution, spread across Delaware County and beyond.¹¹

WHEREAS, Chester is known as one of the nation’s worst cases of environmental racism, in large part because of the presence of this incinerator.

WHEREAS, Covanta Delaware Valley has the fewest air pollution controls of any trash incinerator in the nation, and lacks any controls for nitrogen oxides or for highly toxic mercury and dioxins.¹²

WHEREAS, studies of communities living near trash incinerators have shown many elevated cancers, as well as increased respiratory and heart diseases.¹³

WHEREAS, only 1.8% of the waste burned in Chester comes from Chester. 31% is from Philadelphia, 29% is from the rest of Delaware County, and almost all the rest is from out-of-state, mainly New York City, and New Jersey.¹⁴

⁶ <http://zwia.org/zero-waste-definition/>

⁷ <http://zwia.org/zwh/>

⁸ <http://www.energyjustice.net/incineration/>

⁹ <http://www.energyjustice.net/incineration/worsethancoal>

¹⁰ <http://www.energyjustice.net/md/beyond.pdf>

¹¹ <http://www.energyjustice.net/incineration/ash;>

http://cedatareporting.pa.gov/reports/powerbi/Public/DEP/WM/PBI/Solid_Waste_Disposal_Information

¹² <http://www.ejnet.org/chester/pollutioncontrol.html>

¹³ <http://www.energyjustice.net/incineration/healthstudies.pdf>

¹⁴ http://cedatareporting.pa.gov/reports/powerbi/Public/DEP/WM/PBI/Solid_Waste_Disposal_Information

WHEREAS, the toxic ash produced fills up the Delaware County Solid Waste Authority’s Rolling Hills Landfill in Berks County.

WHEREAS, the county’s landfill would last longer and be less toxic if the county stopped importing trash from seven states, and handled its own waste, landfilling only what is left after reducing waste through sustainable Zero Waste methods.¹⁵

WHEREAS, for at least three decades, Pennsylvania has been the largest importer of trash,¹⁶ and is awash in excess landfill capacity, including three other landfills in Berks County alone – more than enough to allow for Delaware County to end its reliance on incineration once the current contract expires.¹⁷

WHEREAS, well-established Zero Waste strategies such as “Save As You Throw” and curbside composting collection can quickly cut waste by 60% or more, and further reductions are possible with the proper policies and programs, saving landfill space without all of the pollution associated with trash burning; and¹⁸

WHEREAS, Delaware County’s current contract with Covanta runs through April 30, 2022 and requires that the county provide a minimum of 300,000 tons of waste per year, or pay Covanta a Waste Shortfall Fee. This penalizes the county if it succeeds in reducing waste by more than 21% of current levels, and could cost the county millions of dollars a year if any Zero Waste strategies were adopted.¹⁹

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY [body] of [municipality] that the [body] formally urges Delaware County Council and the Delaware County Solid Waste Authority to ensure that the county no longer incinerates its waste after the current Covanta incineration contract expires, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the [body] of [municipality] requests that Delaware County Council only guarantee the \$50 million in borrowing by the Delaware County Solid Waste Authority to expand Rolling Hills Landfill if the expansion is to be used solely for Delaware County waste and no incinerator ash; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the [body] of [municipality] requests that Delaware County Council and the Delaware County Solid Waste Authority, in collaboration with the City Council of the City of Chester, evaluate any decrease in the host community fee paid by Covanta to the City of Chester, and close the gap through the Authority’s waste disposal fee, or via off-setting economic development measures; and

¹⁵ <https://www.ecocycle.org/specialreports/leftovers>

¹⁶ <http://www.actionpa.org/waste/>

¹⁷ <https://www.dep.pa.gov/Business/Land/Waste/SolidWaste/MunicipalWaste/MunicipalWastePermitting/Pages/MW-Landfills-and-Resource-Recovery-Facilities.aspx>

¹⁸ <http://payasyouthrow.org>

¹⁹ <http://www.chesterresidents.org/covanta/wastecontracts/>, specifically: <http://chesterresidents.org/pdf/wastecontract-delco.pdf>

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the [body] of [municipality] formally urges Delaware County Council to retain Zero Waste experts to develop a county-wide Zero Waste Plan, and for the county to provide support to municipalities transitioning to “Save As You Throw,” curbside composting collection, and other proven waste reduction strategies.

ADOPTED and RESOLVED by the [municipality] [Council/Commissioners/Supervisors] this _____ day of _____, 2021.

BY: _____

ATTEST: _____
Secretary