

Dear County Council and Representatives:

We need a public hearing and a resolution introduced by a council member to deny the contract extension of the trash incinerator in Dickerson.

Trash incinerators are known polluters, harming residents with increased levels of respiratory ailments and cancer-causing heavy elements as well as hampering our climate efforts. This is not clean energy. This is dirty energy polluting an overburdened community.

The toxic ash from our incinerator is dumped on a majority black community outside of Richmond, Virginia.

With Trump in the Oval Office, we cannot count on the EPA to uphold our clean air standards. We need our local representatives to safeguard our environment.

That a resolution is additionally needed along with a public hearing on this matter was withheld from public and advisory groups like DAFIG and SWAC in addition to NOT being included on the DEP website. As a stakeholder living with my children in the shadow of the incinerator, this feels underhanded at best.

In the 2021 resolution from Elrich, it was noted that “We know that the Council is committed to ensuring that the county is managing its waste in an environmentally and socially responsible manner. The end goal is to close the incinerator within the next **12-18 months** and to put in place alternatives for processing our waste materials. Having the incinerator has kept the focus on its continued operation and detracted from an incentive to consider innovative approaches used elsewhere. As the nearby coal power plant reduced its use, then closed for good, the trash incinerator is the county’s largest single source industrial air polluter.... There is literature showing that emissions from incinerators contribute to asthma attacks and other adverse health impacts. Additionally, I believe the practice of shipping the incinerator’s ash to majority-Black communities in Virginia – currently, a rather populated one near Richmond creates an inequitable situation.”

It is 2025. The trash incinerator is still burning.

As reported in “Beyond Incineration” by Zero Waste Montgomery County,

The MCRRF trash incinerator the foremost industrial air polluter in Montgomery County, accounting for nearly half of our county’s industrial air pollution. It is our county’s largest single source of greenhouse gases, ammonia, arsenic, beryllium, cadmium, chromium (VI), hydrochloric acid, mercury, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter (PM10), fine particulate matter (PM2.5), and sulfur dioxide. It is second only to the Montgomery County Airpark in Gaithersburg in toxic lead emissions. Some chemicals known to be released by incinerators have no safe dose, including dioxins, lead, mercury, and particulate matter.¹

¹U.S. EPA 2017 National Emissions Inventory www.epa.gov/air-emissions-inventories/2017-national-emissions-inventory-nei-data (with data from the now-closed coal power plant removed); “No evidence of dioxin cancer

Would you want your children or grandchildren or families exposed to pollutants for which there is NO safe level?

We were promised a solution to the burning would have already been implemented TWO YEARS AGO. Extending for ANOTHER extension past the “emergency” extensions to this contract with an industrial polluter is unacceptable.

There are emergency solutions which can be implemented right now while a long-term solution (which should have been already implemented) can be managed. There is one more year left on the current contract, and DEP said a long-term solution can be ready to go in 24 months. Surely, we don’t need to sign up for an additional five years of toxic exposure with an “emergency” extension for what only amounts to a one-year gap which could be filled with a different “emergency” plan. Waiting until the last minute to inform advisory groups and the public of the intention of the Council to continue to burn trash when it is well past Elrich’s promise in 2021 of 12-18 months to a solution feels like another promise broken.

Please act to restore the public’s faith in our elected government. There aren’t too many positives in the broader public landscape these days. Residents of our county would like to know our local representatives are working for us and not dirty industries.

Should it be decided by the Council to kick the can down the road again, please use the \$100million requested by the incinerator to maintain the site, bring it up to standard, and put up some monitors to check the emissions. We deserve to know what is poisoning us.

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Thank you,

Erika Bucciantini
Dickerson resident

threshold,” Environmental Health Perspectives 2003 Jul; 111(9): 1145–1147.
www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1241565/ ; “Lead in the environment: No safe dose,” Harvard University excerpt of The Lancet (Sept. 11, 2010). www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/multimedia-article/lead/ ; “Mercury Exposure and Children’s Health,” Current Problems in Pediatric and Adolescent Health Care, 2010 September; 40(8): 186–215. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3096006/ ; World Health Organization, “Ambient (outdoor) air pollution,” May 2, 2018. [www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-\(outdoor\)-air-quality-and-health](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-(outdoor)-air-quality-and-health)