



Protecting Our Rural Legacy

Linden Farm, 20900 Martinsburg Rd., PO Box 218, Dickerson, MD 20842 • Tel. 301-349-4889
www.SugarloafCitizens.org

Council President Kate Stewart
Councilmembers
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20815

February 11, 2025

Testimony on the Resolution to approve the Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan 2025-2034

While we *support the Comprehensive 10-Year Solid Waste Management Plan with amendments* and appreciate the work that DEP is doing to move more toward Zero Waste programs. The principle and most important amendment that we seek is to take language out of the 10-year plan that says that waste reduction technologies must be chosen, built-out and fully implemented before moving from incineration to landfill. The 10-year plan should clearly state that the County will work on these two objectives concurrently, not sequentially.

Even more urgently, we need the Council to pass a Resolution that calls for a vote on the incinerator contract extension. That will allow the County to hold a Public Hearing and let the people speak. Hearing from the public is certainly essential but equally important, is having answers to crucial questions the Council asked in the recent Briefing with the DEP so that the Council can make an informed decision about whether they should accept or deny a contract extension.

Unfortunately, DEP's website is missing information on how the public and the Council must engage on this decision. It does not state that there needs to be a Resolution by the Council *before* a Public Hearing. In my written testimony, I have provided the link to the DEP website and the excerpt at the end of my testimony as reference. In the Council Briefing two weeks ago, many of you expressed concern about public engagement or the lack thereof. This is an example of how challenging it has been for us to get accurate and complete information in order to have a voice in this process.



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Had we had this information from the County, we would have been working with the Council to introduce and vote on a Resolution, and we would have done that right after we learned of the contract extension back in November.

So now the reality is that you are faced with an impossibly tight timeline to make an informed decision:

As the contract extension was announced on November 25th, you have until March 25th to evaluate, judge and decide whether to allow this extension to go forward. If you let that date go by, then it will automatically go into effect, without any County Council input. That gives you a total of 26 business days to introduce a resolution, hold a public hearing and then make your decision about the contract.

The other concern, as I mentioned earlier, is that you have not yet received answers to the questions you raised with the DEP at the public briefing two weeks ago. Where is the cost-benefit analysis that compares the staggering costs of keeping the incinerator open for another seven years to accelerating the timeline to shut it down and pivot to trucking or rail-haul to a landfill? Where is the updated lifecycle analysis that monetizes the very real impacts on human health and the environment of the emissions from our incinerator versus an acceptable landfill? The last life cycle analysis that was done for the County in 2021 showed these costs to be \$259 a ton for our incinerator versus \$80 a ton for landfilling even after hundreds of miles of truck transport. Finally, you need to see their justification for why they think it's better to keep burning our trash and therefore be obligated to build a new aerobic composting facility at a site other than the Dickerson Yard Trim Facility, adding another \$60 million to the already allocated \$28 million to build out that site.

If the DEP cannot get you this information before the March 25th cutoff, then we ask you to deny this extension until such time as they provide you with answers to these questions and, only then, make a judgment on whether the extension is warranted. Perhaps they can find a path forward that does not require seven more years of incineration. Many other municipalities around the country have done this, why not here in Montgomery County?

Respectfully submitted,

Lauren Greenberger
Vice President



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Reference:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DEP/trash-recycling/programs/zero-waste/index.html> (Accessed 2/9/25)

"County Council and the County Executive received a Notice of Intent from the Authority on November 25, 2024. Within 120 days of this formal notice, the County Council can approve or object to the extension of the Service Agreement and notify the Authority. A public hearing is required in order for County Council to object to the extension. If there is no objection to the extension after 120 days, the notice is deemed accepted."