

RESOLUTION OF THE __[municipal body]__
ADOPTING THE ZERO WASTE HIERARCHY AND URGING COUNTY-WIDE TRANSITION TO ZERO WASTE

WHEREAS, in 2019, Delaware County sent 356,000 tons of waste to be burned at the incinerator in Chester.¹

WHEREAS, Many of our most pressing environmental problems are, at heart, caused by waste and inefficiency in how we produce, distribute, and consume products. Eliminating or reducing this waste would yield huge dividends for our future. Zero Waste is an important policy goal for the sake of health, environmental justice, a stable climate, job creation, and a sustainable economy.²

WHEREAS, According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 42% of greenhouse gases produced in the U.S. 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.³

WHEREAS, The Zero Waste International Alliance has developed the first peer-reviewed, internationally accepted definition of Zero Waste and sets the standard for what Zero Waste means.⁴

WHEREAS, Zero Waste is defined 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."

WHEREAS, The definition of Zero Waste is accompanied by a Zero Waste Hierarchy, from highest to lowest priority, governed by seeking the highest and best use of materials.⁵

- Rethink/Redesign
- Reduce
- Reuse
- Recycle/Compost
- Material Recovery
- Biological Treatment
- Stabilized Landfilling

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

WHEREAS, waste incineration is the most expensive and polluting way to manage waste or to make energy.⁶ To make the same amount of energy, trash incineration is more polluting than burning coal.⁷ Per ton of waste disposed, incineration is more harmful than directly using landfills, and releases more

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

² <http://zwia.org>

³ <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/documents/ghg-land-materials-management.pdf>

⁴ <http://zwia.org/zero-waste-definition/>

⁵ <http://zwia.org/zwh/>

⁶ <http://www.energyjustice.net/incineration/>

⁷ <http://www.energyjustice.net/incineration/worsethancoal>

greenhouse gases, acid gases, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, and toxic pollution, even if extensive trucking is needed to reach landfills.⁸

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.⁹

WHEREAS, our trash currently is burned at the Covanta Delaware Valley trash incinerator in the City of Chester. This Covanta incinerator is the largest in the United States and one of the largest in the world, burning up to 3,510 tons of waste each day.¹⁰

WHEREAS, the Covanta Delaware Valley incinerator is one of the largest industrial air polluters in the entire 7-county Philadelphia area, is #1 in Delaware County for toxic mercury emissions, and is the county's largest industrial source of nitrogen oxide pollution that triggers asthma attacks.¹¹

WHEREAS, the childhood asthma hospitalization rate in Delaware County is 22% above the state average, and the rate in Chester City is nearly three times the state average. Childhood asthma rates in Chester are 5x the national average.¹²

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.¹³

WHEREAS, studies of communities living near trash incinerators have shown many elevated cancers, as well as increased respiratory and heart diseases.¹⁴

WHEREAS, only 1.7% of the waste burned in Chester comes from Chester. 33% is from Philadelphia, 27% is from the rest of Delaware County, and almost all the rest is from out-of-state, mainly New York City, and New Jersey.¹⁵

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 eight states, and handled its own waste, landfilling only what is left after reducing waste through sustainable Zero Waste methods.¹⁶

⁸ <http://www.energyjustice.net/md/beyond.pdf>

⁹ http://cedatareporting.pa.gov/reports/powerbi/Public/DEP/WM/PBI/Solid_Waste_Disposal_Information

¹⁰ <https://www.covanta.com/where-we-are/our-facilities/delaware-valley>

¹¹ http://cedatareporting.pa.gov/reports/powerbi/Public/DEP/AQ/PBI/Air_Emissions_Report

¹² PA Department of Health, 2010. <http://www.ejnet.org/chester/asthma.html>

¹³ <http://www.ejnet.org/chester/pollutioncontrol.html>

¹⁴ <http://www.energyjustice.net/incineration/healthstudies.pdf>

¹⁵ http://cedatareporting.pa.gov/reports/powerbi/Public/DEP/WM/PBI/Solid_Waste_Disposal_Information

¹⁶ <https://www.ecocycle.org/specialreports/leftovers>

WHEREAS, for at least three decades, Pennsylvania has been the largest importer of trash,¹⁷ 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 in the next two years.¹⁸

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.¹⁹

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 18% of current levels, and could cost the county millions of dollars a year if any Zero Waste strategies were adopted.²⁰

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE __[municipal body]__, that the [Board] asks the Delaware County Council to ensure that the Delaware County Solid Waste Authority cannot extend the Covanta incineration contract when the option is presented to them by Covanta as early as May 1, 2021.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the [Board] asks 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.

¹⁷ <http://www.actionpa.org/waste/>

¹⁸ <https://www.dep.pa.gov/Business/Land/Waste/SolidWaste/MunicipalWaste/MunicipalWastePermitting/Pages/MW-Landfills-and-Resource-Recovery-Facilities.aspx>

¹⁹ <http://payasyouthrow.org>

²⁰ <http://www.chesterresidents.org/covanta/wastecontracts/>, specifically:
<http://chesterresidents.org/pdf/wastecontract-delco.pdf>