

SWARTHMORE BOROUGH, DELAWARE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
RESOLUTION 2021-04
REQUESTING A COUNTY-WIDE TRANSITION TO ZERO WASTE

WHEREAS, all solid waste collected in Delaware County must be incinerated at the Covanta Delaware Valley incinerator in Chester City, PA according to joint cooperation agreements between each municipality and Delaware County;

WHEREAS, Chester City has a 69% Black population within the 69% White Delaware County,¹ and it is a result of environmental racism that the citizens of Chester City endure disproportionate cumulative effects of pollution from multiple industries;²

WHEREAS, incineration of municipal solid waste in Delaware County creates air pollution that is a threat to the health of residents of Swarthmore Borough and Delaware County;

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 five times the national average;³

WHEREAS, a Zero Waste approach to waste management, which places the highest priority on waste prevention and diversion, will best ensure the health of Delaware County residents and reduce emissions that cause global climate change; and

WHEREAS, a “put or pay” clause in the contract between the Delaware County Solid Waste Authority and Covanta Delaware Valley guarantees that the county burn 300,000 tons per year of trash or pay a Waste Shortfall Fee, which disincentivizes waste reduction and diversion efforts⁴ (in 2019, Delaware County sent 356,000 tons of waste to be burned at the incinerator in Chester⁵),

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Swarthmore Borough requests Delaware County Council to ensure that the Delaware County Solid Waste Authority does not extend the Service Agreement with Covanta Delaware Valley when the option is presented to them by Covanta as early as May 1, 2021;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Swarthmore Borough requests that under no circumstances should the Delaware County Solid Waste Authority enter into any contract which requires the County to send a minimum amount of waste to any facility;

¹ “QuickFacts,” United States Census Bureau accessed February 23, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/delawarecountypennsylvania,chestercitypennsylvania/PST045219>.

² Will Sullivan, “Too Much Pollution for One Place,” PBS NOVA, August 23, 2017, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/article/too-much-pollution/>.

³ PA Department of Health, 2010, <http://www.ejnet.org/chester/asthma.html>.

⁴ “Amended and Restated Service Agreement between Covanta Delaware Valley, L.P. and the Delaware County Solid Waste Authority,” May 15, 2017, <http://chesterresidents.org/pdf/wastecontract-delco.pdf>.

⁵ CE Data Reporting, “DEP Bureau of Waste Management Disposal Info,” Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, accessed February 23, 2021, http://cedatareporting.pa.gov/reports/powerbi/Public/DEP/WM/PBI/Solid_Waste_Disposal_Information.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Swarthmore Borough requests that Delaware County Council retain Zero Waste experts to perform an audit of waste management in Delaware County, including prevention, recycling, organics and trash management;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Swarthmore Borough requests Delaware County Council to retain Zero Waste experts to help develop a county-wide Zero Waste Plan, which should include support for municipalities to develop their own Municipal Zero Waste Plans and transition to separate hauling and processing contracts, Pay/Save-As-You-Throw programs, curbside organics collection programs, and/or other proven waste reduction strategies. The Delaware County Zero Waste Plan should also include incentives and support for local businesses involved in the waste industry to enact Zero Waste behaviors; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Swarthmore Borough requests that the new Delaware County health department, when established, assess the noise pollution and air quality in neighborhoods around the incinerator and make actionable recommendations to improve public health.

DULY ADOPTED by the Swarthmore Borough Council this 9th day of March, 2021

Mary J. Walk
Council President

ATTESTED this 9th day of March, 2021

Jane C. Billings
Borough Manager/Secretary