

BALTIMORE CITIZENS FILE NOTICE OF INTENT TO SUE OVER NATION'S LARGEST TRASH INCINERATOR

Developers of Energy Answers Plant Are Violating Clean Air Act by Proposing to Construct Project Without a Permit

Residents of South Baltimore joined with environmentalists today, Wednesday Feb 10th, to file a notice of intent to sue a New York-based developer over plans to build what would be the largest trash-burning incinerator in the U.S.

United Workers and the Environmental Integrity Project notified Energy Answers that the company is violating the Clean Air Act by proposing to move forward with plans to build the plant after the permit authorizing its construction expired on May 1, 2015.

Under the federal Clean Air Act, approval to build a major source of air pollution, like the Energy Answers incinerator, expires if a company halts construction for a period of eighteen months or more. Construction on the project stopped on November 1, 2013, which was about two years and three months ago.

Residents and advocates have been publicly calling on the Maryland Department of the Environment for six months to find that the Energy Answers permit has expired. This means the company – if it wants to build the waste-to-energy plant – has to apply for a new permit and to hold a new round of public hearings.

Many residents of the Curtis Bay, Brooklyn, and Brooklyn Park neighborhoods closest to the incinerator site – including a student-led organization called Free Your Voice – are fighting the proposed 4,000-ton-per-day trash burning incinerator because of the air pollution that it would add to a neighborhood already suffering from toxic air emissions.

"The incinerator would add more brain damaging lead and mercury to my community which is already the most polluted in the state," said Destiny Watford, Curtis Bay resident and leader with Free Your Voice. "This would violate our basic human right to live in a healthy community."

Instead of an incinerator, residents have been pushing for more positive development alternatives that would create truly green jobs without putting residents' health at risk. Possibilities include a solar energy farm, and recycling and composting facilities.

"The developers of this massive and polluting incinerator project are not following the federal Clean Air Act," said Leah Kelly, attorney for the Environmental Integrity Project. "After spending six months asking the Maryland Department of the Environment for a decision to this effect, we are now notifying Energy Answers of our intent to seek a decision in a court of law."

On December 15, 2015, more than 100 protesters gathered at MDE headquarters to demand that the state nullify the expired permit for Energy Answers. "Pull the permit!" the protesters chanted, according to media reports. Seven of the protestors conducted a sit-in, refusing to leave the building until MDE issued a decision that the permit had expired. In response, dozens of police officers arrived to arrest the seven protestors engaging in civil disobedience, including a local high school student and a physician who opposes the incinerator project. The charges were later dropped.

Among those arrested was Dr. Gwen DuBois, Secretary of Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility. "In addition to increasing the likelihood of preventable premature death from air pollutants that increase the risk of respiratory illness, heart attacks, strokes and lung cancer, this facility has been permitted to emit 1,000 pounds of lead yearly, to which the immature brain is especially susceptible. This can cause behavioral changes and loss of IQ," DuBois said. "Yet the project sits within a mile of two schools."

After the protest at MDE on Dec. 15, the activists returned to the state agency to drop off petitions signed by almost 2,000 people. The petitions asked the state to find the incinerator permit invalid.

Rodette Jones, a Curtis Bay resident and manager of the Filbert St. Garden, said that local residents would much prefer to see a composting or recycling plant built at the site instead of an incinerator. "We have community-driven alternatives to the incinerator that could take our city forward with good green jobs instead of dumping more lead and mercury on us, and burning precious resources," said Jones.

Debbie Frank, president of the Arundel Neighborhood Association, said: "We can create jobs without sacrificing our health."





FEATURED ARTIST OF THE MONTH



Taylor Smith-Hams

I am a student at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), and I am researching, writing, and painting about the campaign to stop the incinerator in Curtis Bay for my senior thesis. My art is largely motivated by instances of environmental pollution and injustice, and I hope that my paintings can help draw attention to these problems and promote a culture of equitable sustainability.

When I first learned about the campaign to stop the incinerator, I was immediately inspired by the campaign's youth leadership, creative organizing, and call for positive alternatives and fair development. I have been particularly excited about the campaign's use of the arts to promote environmental and social justice, such as the Free Your Voice anthem performed for the school board. As another artist involved in the campaign has observed, the arts create space for metaphor, fun, and alternative vision, and the students leading this campaign have made full use of all three of those attributes.

I deeply value research as a part of my art practice, so the opportunity to focus on a local, ongoing campaign has been incredibly rewarding. I've really enjoyed going to campaign events and meeting and interviewing community members and campaign leaders. These personal interactions have allowed me to explore recurring themes and symbols in my paintings and have greatly increased my investment in the work and understanding of the issue. It's been a wonderful experience so far, and I look forward to continuing to learn and make work about this exciting campaign. I'm so grateful for everyone who has taken the time to share his or her experiences and ideas with me over the past several months.

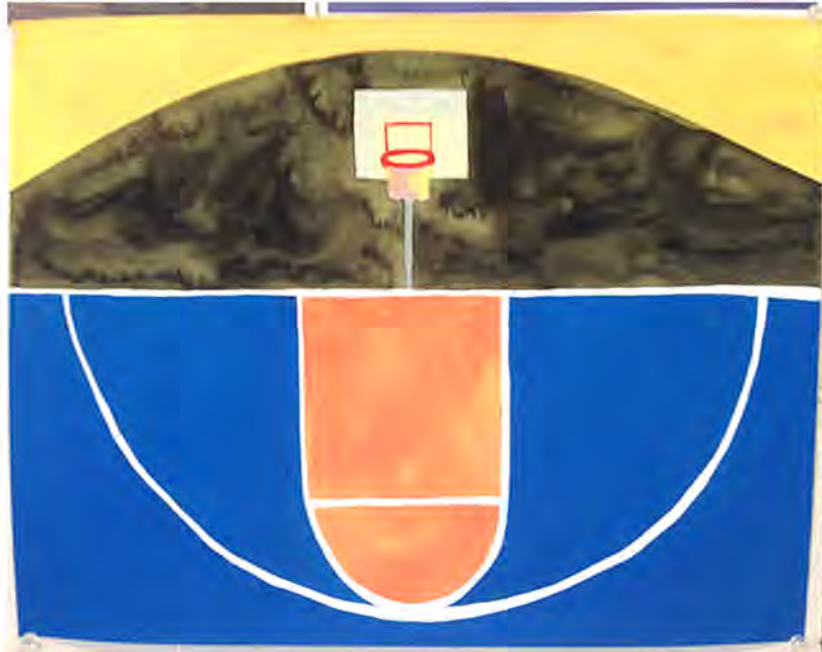
All of my paintings inspired by the Free Your Voice campaign will be on display during MICA's Commencement Exhibition, which will take place on campus from May 13-16. I hope you will stop by! Please contact me if you would like any more information at tsmithhams@mica.edu.

Putting Brooklyn-Curtis Bay On the Map by Chloe Ahmann

In the 1970s, the brand-new Maryland Science Center boasted a map of Baltimore City that left out Brooklyn-Curtis Bay. The omission surprised few. Though this region has been a part of the city of Baltimore since 1919, when it was annexed to “attract a large increase of capital” to the region by housing heavy industry, it has long been described as “forgotten.”

When I taught first-grade at Curtis Bay Elementary/Middle School, we frequently had trouble getting substitute teachers. Few had heard of Curtis Bay, and those who had assumed it wasn't a part of the city. According to residents I've spoken with, utility companies often reply to service calls with the same confusion. And just a few weeks ago I had trouble driving through local streets, because it seemed to be the last place serviced by city plows. Even some of the region's elected officials seem bemused by the region. Someone told me recently that a community organization invited Jack Young, President of the City Council, down for a visit. “He got lost—he wound up in the county, and I guess he had to go back and get his GPS and re-route. He didn't even know where Curtis Bay was.” For residents well aware that they bear the brunt of many city nuisances, from waste disposal to hazardous chemical plants, this neglect has been a sore spot for years. But it's never quieted them. Instead, Brooklyn-Curtis Bay has learned to speak up and fight back.

In the early 1990s, a small group in the area advocated that the neighborhoods secede from the city and return to Anne Arundel County. When that seemed unrealistic, many changed their addresses—officially—from Baltimore to Curtis Bay, surprising the occasional mail carrier. Groups have also emerged in vocal protest at key moments in the region's history, fighting the storage of radioactive materials on Ordnance Road during the 1970s, the danger of chemical plants during the 80s and 90s, and recently plans to build a waste-to-energy plant in nearby Fairfield. But if I've come to learn anything over the past few years, it's that people in Brooklyn-Curtis Bay don't just fight against. As a member of the Community of Curtis Bay Association said to a Baltimore Sun reporter in 1998, “we're doing everything we can to put Curtis Bay on the map.”



Students and Teachers Focusing on Environment, Health and Community by Vernelle Hawkins

Greetings from Benjamin Franklin High School at Masonville Cove! We are excited to welcome 2016 and have been working hard to help both the community and the environment. For example, Ashley Lyman and Alyssa Purdy are Ben Franklin students who have been recruited to work as interns at Masonville Cove Educational Center. This gives students hands on exposure to major projects to help the Chesapeake Bay watershed as well as valuable work experience.

Students are learning about the environment and issues surrounding their communities during environmental science classes at Ben Franklin. In the next few weeks we will be working with Clean Air Partners to monitor and map air pollution levels in the Curtis Bay/Brooklyn area. The data collected will be part of a larger project and students will be able to give recommendations for cleaner air to help their families and neighbors.

For the first time ever in history, Ben Franklin will also be an official weather monitor for NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). As part of a grant from National Science Foundation (NSF) students received Air Quality monitoring equipment as well as a state of the art weather station. This weather station will be used to collect data 24 hours a day on school grounds. The information will be sent to NOAA and will be used in a worldwide climate monitoring program GLOBE. Students at Benjamin Franklin are working hard to make a better tomorrow for themselves and the community.



News from the Ben Franklin Family Center

located at 1201 Cambria Street

GED orientation will take place on 02/23 & 02/25 @ 10am.

Classes begin 03/01 1-4pm every Tuesday and Thursday.

Our ESOL orientation is 04/14 @ 9:30am and classes are held every Tuesday and Thursday 9am-12pm.

We have ongoing voter registration.

Reactions to the latest news on the incinerator

"We are really behind here in Baltimore with composting and recycling but we have the opportunity to catch up. We have community driven alternatives to the incinerator that could take our city forward with good green jobs instead of dumping more lead and mercury on us and burning precious resources. I am glad that we are at this point because we are really standing up as a community calling on MDE to join with us to protect our health and environment so we can move forward."

-Rodette Jones, Curtis Bay resident and manager of the Filbert St. Garden

"The incinerator would add more brain damaging lead and mercury to my community which is already the most polluted in the state. This would violate our basic human right to live in a healthy community. We have been calling upon MDE to enforce the law for nearly 6 months but no real action has been taken. We are pushing towards positive alternatives that create truly green jobs without putting our lives at risk. The incinerator is holding us back."

-Destiny Watford, Curtis Bay resident and leader with Free Your Voice

"I truly feel sad and disappointed in the matter of Energy Answers. It seems to me that everyone involved should have worked together to ensure the health and safety of not only the neighbors but workers and the results are not justified by the offering of much needed jobs. The sacrifice is too great. We can create jobs without sacrificing our health."

-Debbie Frank, president of the Arundel Neighborhood Association

The grass roots efforts to fight to stop a proposed 4,000 ton per day incinerator in Curtis Bay, Baltimore has mobilized the community to fight for positive alternatives to incinerating garbage; that is, a local network of processing, manufacturing, composting and reuse enterprises that would bring hundreds of jobs with good wages and health benefits for residents. ILSR is proud to be working with CCYD, the Ben Center, United Workers and Free Your Voice in the immediate Curtis Bay-Brooklyn neighborhoods as well as with their supporters throughout Baltimore and Anne Arundel County.

- Neil Seldman, president of the Institute for Local Self Reliance

"In addition to increasing the likelihood of preventable premature death from air pollutants that increase the risk of respiratory illness, heart attacks, strokes and lung cancer, this facility has been permitted to emit 1000 lbs of lead yearly to which the immature brain is especially susceptible causing behavioral changes and loss of IQ. Yet it sits within a mile of two schools."

Dr. Gwen DuBois, Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility



Top left. The "incinerator 7" upon release from central booking.



Top Right. Community and faith leaders talk to the press on Dec 15th.

Bottom left. Residents gathered outside MDE on Dec 15th.

Bottom Right. Long time Brooklyn Park leaders calling on MDE to enforce the law.

