

Friends of Bolin Creek
Memo to Chapel Hill Mayor and Town Council
March 12, 2025

Dear Mayor Anderson and Council members,

Friends of Bolin Creek are here tonight to advocate for the public health of Bolin Creek and our community members.

In 2014, we brought Mayor Kleischmidt's attention to the dangers of leaving coal ash in an unlined pit in the center of town. This pit contains known hazardous substances, including heavy metals, which have leached into the environment and will continue to do so.

Our assessment and concerns persist as we learn more from experts and hear about towns like Mooreville that have experimented with building on coal ash landfills with unfortunate consequences. In 2014, town-commissioned well-sampling revealed that the ash had contaminated groundwater and that, over time, tons of coal ash had been washed down the hill.

Happily, the Town removed 1,000 tons of coal ash that had washed into the Greenway and Bolin Creek below. But more hurricanes pose a danger. We have video footage of flood waters during Hurricane Florence lapping the hill of coal ash and inevitably carrying it into Bolin Creek. There is little in this plan to prevent this from continuing. Bolin Creek is an impaired waterway feeding Jordan Lake, a primary drinking water supply. Water quality matters!

At the end of 2024, we learned that the EPA considers coal ash to be more dangerous than initially thought. The EPA identified an increased cancer risk even when ash makes up only 1% to 2% of the soil mixture. Due to the high levels of arsenic and cadmium present in coal ash, individuals may develop health problems unrelated to cancer, such as heart disease and stroke. The DEQ ignored this new information. Can you ensure that a human or animal visiting the Government Services Building or parking deck area won't come into contact with coal ash?

Your job tonight is to decide whether the NC Brownfields Agreement for 828 MLK Jr Blvd does enough to protect public health. Because the DEQ required no more coal ash to be removed, we believe building on this coal ash landfill is as risky as ever.