

My name is Nancy Watkins. I'm one of many Chapel Hill residents who are concerned about our city's plan to develop low-income housing on our city's 59,000-ton coal ash dump site at 828 MLK Blvd. As a neuroscientist, writer, and a person living with physical disabilities who has had to live in sub-standard housing, I think the plan deserves further assessment and discussion before its implementation.

From all I've read, watched, and discussed with others, it's apparent that there are unresolved disagreements about the science re the dangers of coal ash contaminants and its safe containment; it's unclear whether our city is dedicated to developing safe and decent housing for our impoverished populations; and there's significant dissent in the public sector about the current plan. I believe these conflicts should be respected and addressed.

The city's current plan appears to depend on the analyses of the site, and recommendations for containment of hazardous coal ash contaminants, by "Hart and Hickman, Smart Environmental Solutions". Their initial report was on 10/21, followed by a letter to address specific questions by the council written on 02/22/22.

Hart and Hickman's report concluded that for future residents living on two "exposed units" of the 10-acre site, acceptable human health risk levels are exceeded. The report also concluded that for future construction workers at all three exposed units, acceptable human health risk levels are exceeded. And, the report concluded that for nonresidential workers at one exposed unit, the human health risk levels are acceptable.

H&H's letter of 02/22/22 goes into cancer risks as related to the assessments done in 2021 and concludes the risk is negligible. It doesn't address any other human health risks, and no mention is made of the serious negative effects of coal ash combustion products (or contaminants) on the developing fetus or growing children.

Re the risk to future construction workers, H&H recommend land use restriction measures, and say an Environmental Management Plan should be prepared to "prevent construction worker exposure, manage impacted soil, and minimize potential for off-site migration (of CCPS) during construction activities" (residential development).

Re the "redevelopment" plan, the H&H report states that if the site is developed for residential use, they recommend "permanent means to address exposed CCPs and

prevent erosion." Then they go on to say that they recommend **remediation** (which means **reversal or stopping environmental damage**), and they define remediation as "**excavation, impervious cover** to prevent exposure, and resampling to verify concentrations...."

A top layer covering with soil or capping is not an impervious cover, nor is it a permanent means to address exposed CCPs - it's a temporary measure. And, capping doesn't address the deeper coal ash contaminants, which will continue to leach into nearby water and the ground. One impoundment retaining wall is a temporary method, holding only a specific amount of coal ash in place for an indeterminate time. There are many reports of these walls giving way and resulting in disastrous coal ash sludge spills. **Neither of these measures reverse or stop environmental damage of a coal ash dump site.**

The Physicians for Social Responsibility report on coal ash – the toxic threat to our health and environment - states, "the greatest level of protection is afforded by composite liners constructed by using layers of a plastic membrane like high-density polyethylene placed over clay or geosynthetic clay". "The single most important factor re the robustness of a storage site is whether the disposal site is lined, and composite liners are the most effective."

In 48 states, including NC, excavation, drying of coal ash, containment and relocation of the dangerous matter to unpopulated and safe areas are being carried out. NC legally charged Duke Energy with the responsibility of complete clean up of 33 coal ash disposal sites, the waste from 14 state-wide coal-fired power plants. Nationally, it's an uphill battle to require and manage the complete and long-term disposal of our second highest waste product.

What are our priorities? Are any of the minimal and temporary means of containment really satisfactory to our city? Are we truly concerned about creating safe and decent homes for our impoverished families and individuals? Who benefits by the approximate \$3 million minimal containment plan, versus the approximate \$13 million complete excavation, lined-containment, and removal of safely contained coal ash and its contaminants to a safe, unpopulated area?

A noteworthy quote: "Low-income communities live near a disproportionate share of coal ash disposal facilities."

Chapel Hill prides itself on being an "enlightened and humanitarian community". Are we?

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I urgently recommend that everyone present here and involved in the decision to minimally contain our city's 59,000 ton coal ash site and use it for the development of low-income housing read this report:

Physicians for Social Responsibility and Earth Justice – Coal Ash: the Toxic Threat to Our Health and Environment