



REACH

RESIDENTS ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH

P.O. Box 385, Contoocook, N.H. 03229

REACH for Health and Safety



PRESIDENT

Ron Lajoie, Esq.
home: 746-4133 work: 669-4140
e-mail: RonLajoie@comcast.net

V. P. STATE AND FEDERAL LAWS

John Friberg, Jr., Esq.
home: 746-2389 work: 628-4085
e-mail: jfriberg@nixonpeabody.com

V.P. PUBLIC POLICY

Janet Ward
home: 746-4991
e-mail: jwardnh@aol.com

V.P. STATE REGULATIONS

Karen Irwin
home: 746-4697
e-mail: KIrwin@tds.net

V.P. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Susan Covert
home: 746-4486
e-mail: scovert@comcast.net

SECRETARY

Susan Allen
home: 746-6403
e-mail: sja0908@comcast.net

TREASURER

Shauna Ferguson
home: 746-4696
e-mail: shaunaferguson@comcast.net

HEALTH AND SAFETY

John Bassi, M.D.
home: 746-6268 work: 456-6106
e-mail: jbassi@crhc.org

Trish Underwood
home: 746-3509
e-mail: p-underwood@comcast.net

SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

Bob Vallari
home: 746-3875 work: 222-4008
e-mail: rvallari@anselm.edu
e-mail: RVallari@aol.com

RECYCLING

Katherine Mitchell
home: 746-4543
e-mail: kmitch@csd.k12.nh.us

ZONING

Rob Pearce, Esq.
work: 628-1430
e-mail: robpearce@comcast.net

HOPKINTON COORDINATORS

Liane Kerbyson
home: 746-6069
e-mail: lianemk@surglobal.net

Michelle Bickford
home: 746-3851
e-mail: bmbick@comcast.net

Jim Cleary
home: 746-6246
e-mail: jwclea@comcast.net

June Adinah
home: 746-6682
e-mail: jadinah@comcast.net

Melanie Wheat
home: 225-8334
e-mail: Mel0273@aol.com

OPEN LETTER TO THE CITIZENS OF HOPKINTON

3/15/08

Dear Friends:

As you know, the members of REACH have been concerned about the health and safety of our citizens related to the operation of the Bio Energy plant in West Hopkinton, particularly with the company's expressed intent to burn wood chips derived from construction and demolition debris (C&D). Now that the incineration of C&D has been banned by the State Legislature effective January 1, 2008, the representatives of Bio Energy have approached our Town with a proposal to build a 32 megawatt power facility that would produce three times the energy of the present plant.

While Bio Energy would like this proposal approved, we were pleased that William Dell'Orfano, the President of Bio Energy, expressed a willingness to consider alternative business uses for the property. The REACH board has voted unanimously to assist and cooperate with the Board of Selectmen and the owners of Bio Energy with plans to develop an alternative use of the West Hopkinton facility. The REACH Board, however, also voted unanimously to oppose the development of any facility at the West Hopkinton site that emits hazardous air toxins. We believe there are substantial **health and safety concerns with the operation of such a facility at this particular location.**

I. NO REAL BENEFIT TO THE COMMUNITY

Bio Energy and our Town Selectmen have estimated that a 32 megawatt facility would have a value of approximately 65 million dollars. This should result in a potential tax benefit to the community of approximately 1.3 million dollars. While this may seem appealing to many at first glance, it should be noted that, in order to be financially viable, **Bio Energy is seeking a "payment in lieu of taxes" (PILOT) agreement to pay only \$300,000 a year in taxes.** This translates into a tax savings of approximately \$.32 per \$1,000 evaluation, or a \$64.00 tax reduction for a residence valued at \$200,000.

Unfortunately, the negative net financial effect to our community would be significant. The taxes in this town are high, particularly high for those who own land with a view. If the proposed 32 megawatt facility were to go on line with its smokestack pumping out visible plumes of emissions, each of the property owners with a view will demand tax abatement and suffer a significant reduction in their property values. In addition, the value of any property in close proximity to the facility undoubtedly will be substantially decreased. It is also expected that the presence and operation of such a facility would have a negative effect on the retention of current residents as well as the attraction of new ones to our community. **The net effect for the town will be an overall reduction in the tax base** and lower property values. In our view, supporting the proposal to expand the operations at the Bio Energy site is short-sighted even based on a purely financial analysis.

II. HARMFUL EMISSIONS REMAIN CONCERN

The question remains whether such a facility would emit toxins harmful to the environment and the 10,000 residents who live in a five mile radius of the proposed facility. This is particularly concerning because Maple Street School is only three miles from the facility. Even if this new plant were to employ Best Available Control Technology (BACT), an increase to a 32 megawatt facility would demand larger amounts of combustible materials. The net effect would be the **emission of substantial greenhouse gases** such as nitrogen oxide (NOx) at levels comparable to the present facility (approximately 125 tons per year) when in operation. While particulate matter would be less, the emissions would still be substantial at 33.16 tons per year.

While REACH acknowledges that, with current emission control technology, it is possible to reduce the volume of some heavy metals, volatile organic compounds and the amount of particulate matter released into the atmosphere, all wood burning **power plants emit approximately 87 hazardous air toxins through the combustion process.** If this plant goes on line, these hazardous air toxins will flow right out the smokestack and into Hopkinton's air without any monitoring. This can only have a negative impact on the health of our community. The **technology simply does not exist to make this a healthy operation.** We are especially concerned given the location of the plant in close proximity to residences, schools, a federally-designated natural and recreational refuge, and the protected and fragile Contoocook River.

Further, when REACH and the Selectmen asked Bio Energy to provide it with the estimated emission profile for the proposed 32 megawatt facility, Bio Energy stated that such a profile would not be available until such time as the plant is designed and in operation. At that time, tests of the emissions coming from the smokestack (stack tests) could be taken and the emission profile finally known. If the 32 megawatt facility is up and running, there would be little our community could do to prevent the plant from going on line despite toxic stack emissions.

Please note: There is **significant pressure to overturn HB 428, the legislation which bans the incineration of C&D debris.** The facility proposed by **Bio Energy would be fully capable of burning either virgin wood, C&D or coal.** With a change in State Government, our community may be threatened with C&D incineration once again at the Bio Energy facility.

III. TRANSPORTATION INCREASES ON 202 & 9 ADD TO DANGEROUS INTERSECTION

Known as "Death Alley," the junction of US Route 202&9 located by the Golden Pineapple store has been the scene of numerous motor vehicle collisions. The increase to a 32 megawatt facility will require an overall increase of wood chips being transported by heavy trucks to the facility. The projected increase will exacerbate an already unacceptable traffic problem in the vicinity of the plant. According to Bio Energy, wood consumption would increase from 232,000 tons per year to approximately 360,000 tons per year resulting in 40-50 truck deliveries per day. This is a substantial increase over the 30-35 truck deliveries prior to the plant's closure several years ago. Recent information obtained from industry experts projects the **increase to 60-70 trucks per day,** well above the estimates provided by Bio Energy.

IV. NOISE AND ODOR NUISANCES

No information has been presented regarding the potential noise and odor issues posed by the development of a 32 megawatt facility. As we know from litigation between Bio Energy and town residents in the past, noise from the Bio Energy facility has been a major problem for many residents in our community.

V. VIOLATIONS OF ZONING ORDINANCE

In order to construct a 32 megawatt facility, Bio Energy will:

- raise stack size (from 157' to as much as 190');
- increase boiler building height from 60' to as much as 120';
- increase the overall footprint of the facility; and
- require towering piles of wood chips to fuel the facility.

All of these increases are violations of the Hopkinton Zoning Ordinance, and would, therefore, require a variance. The Hopkinton Zoning Ordinance, in part, was created to facilitate the most effective use of land and to avoid indiscriminant construction in areas that would adversely affect the rights of other landowners in the community. Towering smokestacks, boilers and billowing plumes of emissions are not consistent with the nature and character of our community and implicate serious issues associated with landowners' rights, health, safety and welfare.

VI. CAUTION!

Our town officials must scrutinize the proposed plan presented by Bio Energy and not accept it at face value. Preliminary reports from industry experts suggest that **Bio Energy has presented data to the Selectmen which underestimates** the amount of wood chips that would be incinerated, which underestimates the increased volume of traffic from trucks hauling fuel to Bio Energy, and which underestimates the size of the smoke stack required (significantly larger in width and height than the present stack).

VII. ALTERNATIVE USES FOR THE WEST HOPKINTON SITE

REACH is willing to support Bio Energy's development of its West Hopkinton property in a way that would be both productive for the owners and beneficial to the residents of the community. Building a 32 megawatt incinerator to replace the facility that already exists is not the answer. Rather, it would irreversibly compromise West Hopkinton. This land has great potential. Let's urge our Selectmen to encourage alternative uses for the property that will benefit all involved.

