Easton, Pennsylvania

January 19, 2017

A regular meeting of the Northampton County Council was held on the above date with the following present: John Cusick, President; Glenn A. Geissinger, Vice President; Mathew M. Benol; Matthew H. Dietz; Margaret L. Ferraro (via telephone); Kenneth M. Kraft; Hayden Phillips; Seth Vaughn; Robert F. Werner; Linda M. Zembo, Clerk to Council, Philip D. Lauer, Solicitor to Council.

Prayer

Mr. Cusick led County Council in a moment of silence.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Cusick led County Council in the pledge of allegiance.

Approval of the Minutes

Mr. Kraft made the following motion:

Be It Moved By the Northampton County Council that the minutes of the January 3, 2017 and January 5, 2017 meetings shall be approved.

Mr. Dietz seconded the motion.

The minutes were approved by voice acclamation.

Courtesy of the Floor

Ms. Deanna Durante, NBC10 News - asked if any member of County Council had any comment regarding Ms. Sara Packer and her employment with the County or made inquiries as to what this County knew in 2010 when her employment was terminated and if that information was passed on to any other County or social service agency.
Mr. Cusick stated it was a horrific tragedy and what he knew of the matter was what he read in the newspaper. He further stated there was an ongoing investigation and he hoped the County was cooperating fully so justice could be served.

Ms. Durante advised that did not answer the question as to what the County knew in 2010 and what it did with that information.

Mr. Lauer stated he did not think at this point in time anyone knew precisely what was known at that time and that was part of the ongoing investigation. He further stated he was sure at the appropriate time the District Attorney and anyone else with that information would make some sort of public statement. He added he felt it would be inappropriate for County Council to comment at all because they did not know the answers to her questions.

Ms. Sherry Acevedo, 3 North Lehigh Avenue, Wind Gap, PA - advised she and a group called Citizens Against Synagro were concerned about the environment and health issues if a sludge plant came to their area. She further advised she was a conservational professional for the past 20 years and had worked with the County with their open space, conservation and farmland preservation issues especially up in the Slate Belt.

Ms. Acevedo stated she wanted to make County Council aware that this plant would have major environmental impacts that were not being taken into consideration. She further stated the plant would be located in Plainfield Township, but it would be impacting their water quality and streams.

Ms. Acevedo advised it was reported that in other parts of the country where these types of facilities were located people could not be out of their homes for long periods of time due to the amount of pollution. She further advised she did not want this for her family or for the community they helped build.

Ms. Dottie Petrilak, 590 Briar Road, Per Oravyl, PA - stated what had been reported about the Synagro project was nice; however, some of their sludge was diverted into the Little Bushkill Creek and the Fish Commission would no longer stock it with fish.

Ms. Petrilak advised Synagro, along with USA Waste and the Green Knight Economic Development Corporation, made it sound like they were giving a lot of money for economic development to
the community, but out of $1.88 million they only provided $20,000.

Ms. Petrilak stated her biggest concern was the health of the residents. She further stated the plan was to bring in medical and industrial waste from New York City, New Jersey and Connecticut that was going to pollute their air, water and land.

Ms. Ellisa Robles-Carlo, 306 South Robinson Avenue, Pen Argyl, PA - provided a document regarding the Synagro project (see Attachment #1) and advised her main concern was the fact the public had not been represented. She further advised she along with members of the community formed the Sludge Free Slate Belt Community Group that started an online petition and received approximately 700 signatures within three weeks.

Ms. Robles-Carlo stated everything printed in the newspaper about this project had been pro-Synagro and the public really did not know what was going on. She further stated there was a sludge plant in Hunts Point, New York that had an explosion in 2003 and was closed in 2010.

Ms. Robles-Carlo advised their community already dealt with the Grand Central Landfill and the only way to make their wishes known was to protest so they wanted to make people aware that they did not want this project.

Mr. Ares Vega, 3121 Glen Avenue, Easton, PA - stated he belonged to an extracurricular club called the Technology Student Association and there was a program called Project Lead the Way that was increasing the number of engineers and they participated in regional and state competition. He further stated he wanted to know if County Council had any ideas on how to get the word out about their club.

Mr. Cusick suggested they use social media and to reach out to some of the local colleges to see if they could set up a field trip to visit their engineering departments.

Ms. Destiny George, 326 North 11th Street - advised she belonged to the Future Business Leaders of America and would like to know if County Council had any ideas on how to grow their membership.

Mr. Dietz stated the Chamber of Commerce may be able to provide them with the names of local businesses that could help them.
Mr. Cusick advised they may want to speak with Mr. Tim Herrlinger, the Director of the County's Department of Community and Economic Development, who was in the audience. He further advised they may want to begin a small business because entrepreneurship was lacking in the world today.

Mr. Kraft stated maybe they could develop something to sell and then get together with the Technology Student Association to create a webpage for it.

Mr. Bernie O'Hare, Nazareth, PA - advised in July there was a tragedy wherein a young girl was raped, murdered and dismembered by a former Northampton County adoption supervisor. He further advised it was a disgrace that something like that occurred, but what disturbed him was the complete lack of transparency by the Administration and now by County Council about what had happened and what was being done.

Mr. O'Hare stated the public still did not know how many caseworkers were in the Children, Youth and Families Division, what their caseload or work schedule was like, what kind of pressure they were under or what kind of educational background was required. He further stated he wanted to know why no one was asking questions or why Mr. John A. Brown, the County Executive, had not addressed any of these things.

Mr. O'Hare advised in early December when the NBC 10 reporter first began contacting the County about this the County said nothing. He further advised on December 23rd NBC 10 made its report and it was not until a month after that and three hours after Mr. Lamont McClure announced that he was running for County Executive that Mr. Brown finally issued a statement concerning this matter.

Mr. O'Hare stated that was completely unacceptable and it was completely unacceptable for the members of County Council to not demand answers. He further stated members of County Council indicated they could not talk about personnel matters, but they could talk about the caseworker hours.

Mr. Thomas Carlo, Pen Argyl, PA - advised the research regarding sludge plants revealed just how bad this stuff was. He further advised this product was not to be consumed by human beings, but animals were eating it and could result in something like mad cow disease.
Mr. Carlo stated they want to bring in 400 tons of sludge a
day into Waste Management over Routes 33, 512 and 80. He
further stated there were google sites that displayed illnesses
and explosions related to sludge.

Mr. Carlo advised they were also going to be storing
chemicals on the property to be used to scrub the air to make it
smell good and if they were doing that, they were hiding
something. He further advised they just found out that there
was a bridge behind Waste Management that the township just now
decided they wanted to redo. He added Plainfield Township gave
permission for them to use the bridge for a location that could
possibly be a location for the Synagro plant.

Mr. Dietz stated he was a resident of Plainfield Township
and was personally against this project. He further stated the
County spent a lot of money investing in the trail system and
recreation in that area and this would negate all that work.

Mr. Dietz advised he was all for free enterprise, but this
area should not be the dumping grounds to keep the sewerage
costs lower for New York City. He further advised he realized
this was a local issue, but since it could affect the waterways
he would like the County to determine if there was anything that
could be done.

In answer to Mr. Vaughn’s question as to what the County
could do, Mr. Cusick stated he understood the concerns of the
citizens, but there was not much that could be done legally at
the County level, but he suggested they attend the hearings and
be prepared.

Mr. Carlo advised they found out about this issue from
people in Upper Mount Bethel because it was going to be close to
Pen Argyl. He further advised Plainfield Township was making a
decision for three townships and most of Plainfield Township’s
residents did not live in the area where it was going to be
located.

Mr. Benol stated about the only thing County Council could
do was to provide a resolution supporting them and recommended
they contact their State representatives to see if they could
help them.
Mr. Werner commented they were talking about water tables that had to do with their sewerage facilities and there were regulations that governed what could go into that plant so he would suggest contacting those individuals.

Mr. Phillips advised he was the County Council liaison to the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission and did not recall this matter ever being discussed. He further advised he would talk to the Executive Director to determine if anything could be done.

Mr. Geissinger stated both he and Mr. Dietz were residents of the Slate Belt area and they were exploring what could be done from a County standpoint to support them, but it might be best to work at the township level.

**Confirmation of Appointments**

Mr. Kraft introduced the following resolution:

R. 5-2017  
RESOLVED, by the Northampton County Council that the following individuals shall be confirmed in their appointments/re-appointments as indicated hereafter:

**AIRPORT AUTHORITY**

Appointment:  
Brian Daems  
206 Lucas Lane  
Nazareth PA 18064

Re-appointment:  
J. Michael Dowd  
25 Chestnut Ridge Circle  
Easton PA 18042

**Term to Expire:**  
12/21/23

**AREA AGENCY ON AGING**

**ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Appointment:  
Thomas Repasch  
1744K Falcon Drive  
Bethlehem PA 18017

**Term to Expire:**  
7/1/18
Mr. Phillips advised he had reviewed the resumes of all these individuals except for Mr. Daems as it was received late.

Mr. Kraft stated the Personnel Committee meeting did not have a quorum yesterday so no action was taken so they were all being presented at this meeting.

Mr. Phillips advised there was an ordinance that indicated appointments should be presented seven days before consideration.

Mr. Kraft stated after the Personnel Committee meeting, he was asked to place it on tonight’s meeting agenda and he did not see an issue with it because of Mr. Daems’ aviation experience.

Mr. Geissinger advised County Council did not receive the resume earlier because it was caught up on the Administration side.

Mr. Phillips made a motion to remove this appointment from the resolution.

Mr. Cusick indicated the motion died due to a lack of a second.

As there were no further questions or comments, Mr. Cusick called for the vote after it was indicated that Mr. Daems’ appointment would be voted on separately.
The vote: Kraft, "yes"; Phillips, "no"; Vaughn, "yes"; Werner, "yes"; Benol, "yes"; Cusick, "present"; Dietz, "yes"; Ferraro, "yes" and Geissinger, "yes".

The appointment of Mr. Daems was adopted by a vote of 7-1-present.

The vote: Kraft, "yes"; Dietz, "yes"; Ferraro, "yes"; Geissinger, "yes"; Phillips, "yes"; Vaughn, "yes"; Werner, "yes"; Benol, "yes" and Cusick, "yes".

As the remaining individuals were approved by a vote of 9-0, the resolution was adopted.

Controller's Report

Mr. Stephen Barron, Controller, stated his office would be meeting with the external auditors on January 30, 2017 and at 4:00 p.m. Mr. Cusick and Mr. Geissinger would be meeting with them.

After Mr. Cusick indicated that any member of County Council could attend the meeting at 4:00 p.m., Mr. Phillips indicated he would be there.

Mr. Barron advised there had been a discussion regarding the hotel tax and comp rooms specifically at the Sands Casino. He further advised Mr. Bruce Haines from the Hotel Bethlehem informed him there was consideration paid for those rooms between the Sands Casino and the entity that ran that hotel.

Mr. Barron stated if that was the case, they were subject to State tax, as well as the hotel tax, so he was going to look into the matter. He further stated he did not know if a formal ordinance was required so he wanted to know how he should proceed.

Mr. Cusick advised there were other Counties and a neighboring State that had casinos so he suggested he reach out to his colleagues to see how they handled the situation.

Mr. Barron stated he had been on the news recently with regard to the murder case because no one else would speak and he felt Mr. Brown's statement was too little too late. He further stated there were very good people in the Department of Human
Services who were hung out to dry by this Administration and Mr. Brown owed them and the taxpayers an apology.

County Executive Report

Mr. Brown advised he found himself in agreement with Mr. Barron on one point and that was there were great people who worked in the Children, Youth and Families Division. He further advised while other people felt at liberty to share information in the statement he released earlier during the Human Services Committee meeting (see Attachment #2) he asserted "After the horrific circumstances surrounding Grace Packer's death became known, questions were posed to Northampton County, as well as many other entities. Northampton County's Children, Youth & Families Division is bound by strict confidentiality statutes and regulations which preclude the release of detailed information concerning this matter. Moreover, the Agency cannot engage in conduct which could compromise criminal investigations or assessments being conducted by other entities."

Mr. Brown stated the Administration took those restrictions very seriously and by no means was the challenge they had in those confidentialities and honoring those privileges and statutes a reflection of the opinion of this Administration or the taxpayers of the Children, Youth and Families Division. He further stated the workers of Children, Youth and Families Division had the Administration's full support, but this was a process they had to go through.

Mr. Brown advised the Children, Youth and Families Division was working with the State agency and following the protocols that were absolutely appropriate not only to protect the children, but to make sure things were done properly. He further advised while Mr. Barron had an issue with the comments or lack thereof by the Administration on this matter he also found himself challenged by the fact Mr. Barron, as an elected official, was willing to access confidential information and provide a Social Security Number and other information to the media to be published which was in direct violation of a number of Federal, State and local statutes.

Mr. Brown stated the challenge was how to respond on matters like this while protecting not only former employees, but current employees who had an expectation of privacy and confidentiality.
Introduction of an Ordinance Amending Ordinance No. 603-2015 titled, "AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING "THE LIVABLE LANDSCAPES" - AN OPEN SPACE PLAN PROGRAM FOR NORTHAMPTON COUNTY AND FURTHER PROVIDING FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE 21ST CENTURY OPEN SPACE INITIATIVE"

Mr. Cusick advised Messrs. Dietz and Geissinger introduced the following ordinance and indicated the public hearing, debate and possible vote will be held at the February 2, 2017 meeting:

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING NORTHAMPTON COUNTY ORDINANCE NO. 603-2015 TITLED, "AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING "THE LIVABLE LANDSCAPES" - AN OPEN SPACE PLAN PROGRAM FOR NORTHAMPTON COUNTY AND FURTHER PROVIDING FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE 21ST CENTURY OPEN SPACE INITIATIVE"

WHEREAS, Ordinance No. 603-2015 was enacted by the Northampton County Council on January 11, 2016.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY ORDAINED AND ENACTED by the Northampton County Council that Ordinance No. 603-2015 shall be amended as indicated hereafter (sections marked with **bold underline** have been added):

AN ORDNANCE ESTABLISHING "THE LIVABLE LANDSCAPES" - AN OPEN SPACE PLAN PROGRAM FOR NORTHAMPTON COUNTY AND FURTHER PROVIDING FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE 21ST CENTURY OPEN SPACE INITIATIVE

WHEREAS, in 2002, the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission created the "Northampton County Parks - 2010 Plan" document, which has been used to guide the implementation of activities for park, recreation and trail activities within Northampton County; and

WHEREAS, on or about November 4, 2004, the Northampton County Council adopted Ordinance #423-2004, entitled, "AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING THE NORTHAMPTON COUNTY 21ST CENTURY OPEN SPACE INITIATIVE, WHICH ORDINANCE, ACCEPTED THE REPORT OF THE NORTHAMPTON COUNTY COUNCIL OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE PREPARED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION, CREATING THE NORTHAMPTON COUNTY OPEN SPACE ADVISORY BOARD AND ESTABLISHING ITS DUTIES, AND PROVIDING FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE OPEN SPACE INITIATIVE" with the Northampton County 21st Century Open Space Initiative Guidelines which were also
subsequently amended by the enactment of Ordinances #468-2007, #533-2011, #552 of 2012, 559-2012, and 582-2013; and

WHEREAS, Northampton County entered into an agreement with the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission which serves as the official planning commission for Northampton County to act in a research and consulting capacity in order to update the "Northampton County Parks - 2010" document and the "21st Century Open Space Initiative Guidelines"; and

WHEREAS, on or about October 3, 2013, the Northampton County Council adopted Resolution #85-2013, entitled "A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTHAMPTON COUNTY LIVABLE LANDSCAPES STRATEGIC OPEN SPACE PLAN"; and

WHEREAS, Northampton County and the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission has created the Livable Landscapes Plan Steering Committee to assist in the planning and creation of the "Livable Landscapes Plan"; and

WHEREAS, the Livable Landscapes Steering Committee has completed, with input from representatives from Northampton County, local municipalities, business, realtor and health sectors, non-profit organizations, sportsman’s groups, college and university representatives, a "Livable Landscapes Plan"; and

WHEREAS, Northampton County, Lehigh Valley Planning Commission and the Livable Landscapes Steering Committee held two rounds of public meetings to provide insight on the creation of the "Livable Landscapes Plan"; and

WHEREAS, Northampton County Council wishes to support and adopt the "Livable Landscapes Plan".

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDAINED AND ENACTED by the NORTHAMPTON COUNTY COUNCIL:

1. The Livable Landscapes Plan, which is incorporated herein by reference as though the same were more fully set forth at length, as presented and adopted by the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission is hereby adopted by the Northampton County Council as its official Open Space Plan.

2. Northampton County, through the appropriate County Departments, Divisions and Authorities shall utilize guidelines and policies detailed in the Livable
Landslapes Plan when taking actions associated with parks, recreation, trails, and land preservation located in Northampton County.

3. Further the Northampton County Council directs that the Livable Landscapes Plan shall be used when implementing and/or conducting activities under the current 21st Century Open Space Initiative.

4. The Northampton County Council strongly encourages all the Authorities, Boards, Commissions and Departments in Northampton County to follow the recommendations of the Livable Landscapes Plan that may apply to them; and

5. The Northampton County Council strongly urges all of the municipalities in Northampton County to follow the recommendations and studies of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, and closely follow the Livable Landscapes Plan as it applies to both local and regional planning.

6. **Further the Northampton County Council directs that the Livable Landscapes Program replace the Open Space Natural Areas grant program with the Environmental Services Assistance Grant Program and allow for the acquisition and restoration of natural lands.**

Consideration of a Resolution Amending Resolution Number #52-2014

Mr. Dietz introduced the following resolution:

R. 6-2017 **RESOLVED,** By the Northampton County Council that resolution No. 52-2014 shall be amended as indicated hereafter (sections marked with strikeout have been deleted and sections marked with **bold underline** have been added):

*Number 52-2014*

**WHEREAS,** the County of Northampton implemented the Northampton County Open Space Initiative by enacting the Northampton County Open Space Ordinance #423-2004 on November 5, 2004; and
WHEREAS, the Northampton County Open Space Advisory Board has recommended approval of the Ballas Tract Master Site Plan Development Plan Project located in Bushkill Township; and

WHEREAS, the Northampton County funding will be used as follows:

Property Owner: Bushkill Township
Site Location: Ballas Tract, Kromer & Jacobsburg Road
Park Development Description: Pavilion, parking lot, walking trails
Appraised Value: No acquisition involved
Phase II Municipal Allocation: $137,336.89
County Grant Request: $137,336.00 $84,399.14 (50%)
Other Grants: $96,146.00 $59,079.40 (35%) Bushkill Township
$41,190.00 $25,319.75 (15%) Bushkill Township

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED By the Northampton County Council:

(1) The Northampton County Council hereby approves the Ballas Tract Master Site Plan Development Project, located in Bushkill Township. Further, the Northampton County Executive, through the office of the Program Administrator of the Northampton County 21st Century Open Space Initiative, or his/her designee, is directed to take any and all steps necessary to administer and complete Northampton County’s obligations in this project.

(2) The Northampton County Council further directs the Northampton County Executive to appropriate $137,336.00 $84,399.14 as the Northampton County contribution to the Ballas Tract Master Site Plan Development Project, located in the Bushkill Township.

As there were no questions or comments, Mr. Cusick called for the vote.

The vote: Dietz, "yes"; Ferraro, "yes"; Geissinger, "yes"; Kraft, "yes"; Phillips, "yes"; Vaughn, "yes"; Werner, "yes"; Benol, "yes" and Cusick, "yes".

The resolution was adopted by a vote of 9-0.
Consideration of a Resolution Pertaining to the Regional Trail Gap Closure Program — Analysis Work

Mr. Dietz introduced the following resolution:

R. 7-2017 WHEREAS, the County of Northampton adopted Ordinance #603-2015, titled, "AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING "THE LIVABLE LANDSCAPES - AN OPEN SPACE PLAN PROGRAM FOR NORTHAMPTON COUNTY AND FURTHER PROVIDING FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE 21\textsuperscript{ST} CENTURY OPEN SPACE INTIATIVE" on January 7, 2016; and

WHEREAS, the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission published the Lehigh Valley Trails Inventory-2013, in April 2013, which identifies the top ten trail gaps within the Lehigh Valley; and

WHEREAS, the Lehigh Valley Trails Inventory-2013 identified six of the ten of those gaps to be located in Northampton County; and

WHEREAS, Northampton County is focused on the closure of trail gaps located within its borders to connect to multi-County and inter-State regional trail systems, such as the Appalachian Trail, D&L Trail, September 11\textsuperscript{th} National Memorial Trail, Liberty-Water Gap Trail, Delaware & Lehigh River Water Trails and the collective group of trail systems known as “The Circuit”; and

WHEREAS, the development of trails has been proven to increase economic investments, provide a healthier quality of life and promote sustainable tourism through recreational and outdoor activities; and

WHEREAS, the project would provide funding from the Act 13 Marcellus Shale Legacy Funding to provide appraisals, title research and survey work to begin the completion of the identified trails gaps with the oversight conducted by the Open Space Coordinator.

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that the Northampton County Council supports the use of Act 13 Marcellus Shale Legacy Funding for the work to begin the completion of the identified trails gaps through appraisals, title research and survey work up to $100,000.
As there were no questions or comments, Mr. Cusick called for the vote.

The vote: Dietz, "yes"; Geissinger, "yes"; Kraft, "yes"; Phillips, "yes"; Vaughn, "yes"; Werner, "yes"; Benol, "yes"; Cusick, "yes" and Ferraro, "yes".

The resolution was adopted by a vote of 9-0.

Human Services Committee Report

Mr. Vaughn stated at the Human Services Committee meeting an update on Gracedale was provided by Mr. Raymond Soto, Premier Nursing Home Administrator, that indicated it was doing financially well. He further stated Ms. Tiffany Rossanese, Director of the Drug and Alcohol Division, Department of Human Services, provided an update on her division. He added that Mr. Brown read his press release regarding the Grace Packer matter.

Capital Projects and Operations Committee Report

Mr. Phillips advised they received an update on the County’s capital projects. He further advised moving that meeting to the third Wednesday of the month following the Personnel and Finance Committee meeting seemed to be advantageous for everyone.

911 Liaison Report

Mr. Dietz stated he was having Mr. Todd Weaver, Director of Emergency Management Services, attend the second meeting in February to provide an update on the 911 merger.

Solicitor’s Report

With regard to the action taken regarding the approval of the appointment where the information was provided late, Mr. Lauer advised he was asked whether the ordinance that was adopted in April 2015 that directed the County Executive to provide County Council seven business days to evaluate people went against this action. He further advised the ordinance made a direction to how the County Executive and his personnel should provide County Council with information; however, it did not
indicate whether County Council could or could not act on information provided without any notice so it was his opinion County Council acted legally in taking the action it took.

Mr. Phillips stated even though the act was legal the intent of the ordinance was clear and he would never vote on a personnel issue where the information was not provided seven days prior.

In response to Mr. Cusick's question as to whether he was going to provide an appointment to the Retirement Board, Mr. Brown advised he planned to provide it next month.

Mr. Benol stated he agreed with Mr. Phillips and the only reason he voted for the individual was because he felt his resume was impeccable, but going forward if information was not presented to the Personnel Committee, he would not be voting for it.

Adjournment

Mr. Kraft made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Geissinger seconded the motion.

The motion to adjourn passed unanimously by acclamation.
10 DIRTY TRUTHS ABOUT SEWAGE SLUDGE

MYTH 1: SEWAGE SLUDGE IS HUMAN WASTE.

FACT: Sewage sludge (a/k/a biosolids) is a highly complex and unpredictable mixture of biological and chemical pollutants coming from residential, commercial and industrial sewage waste. Over 90,000 toxic substances and chemical compounds can be found concentrated in sewage sludge, and new chemicals are being developed at the rate of 1,000 per year.

MYTH 2: IT IS ILLEGAL FOR HAZARDOUS WASTE TO BE IN SEWAGE SLUDGE.

FACT: Under the "Domestic Sewage Exclusion" of the 503 rule (the federal law governing land application of sewage sludge), every industry connected to a sewer line can pipe its hazardous waste into a wastewater treatment plant. Industries benefit from the domestic sewage exclusion in two ways: 1) they can avoid the expense of properly treating pollutants, and 2) once the two waste streams mix, industries are no longer liable for any damages that might result from this toxic mixture, especially when it is processed and land applied.

MYTH 3: SEWAGE SLUDGE IS TREATED.

FACT: The goal of the wastewater treatment facility is to produce clean water for release back into our rivers and streams; it is never to produce clean sludge. In fact, the dirtier the sludge, the more complete is the concentration of noxious wastes and the more the treatment plant has done its job.

MYTH 4: SEWAGE SLUDGE IS A GOOD FERTILIZER.

FACT: According to chemist and lead contamination expert, Dr. Stanford Tackett, “The high sounding justifications such as ‘sludge is a beneficial resource’ and ‘sludge is just as safe as manure’ are clever excuses designed to fool the public. ...Only 1 to 3 percent of the sludge is useful to plants. The other 97 to 99 percent is contaminated waste that should not be spread where people live.”

MYTH 5: PENN STATE SAYS SEWAGE SLUDGE IS SAFE.

FACT: Penn State is one of many agricultural universities that receives funding from the USDA to support the land application of sewage sludge. To this end, Penn State focuses on the nutrient value of sewage sludge to crops (which authorities agree is less than 3 percent) and does not address the myriad hazardous wastes concentrated in sludge (the remaining 97 percent).

MYTH 6: CLASS A SEWAGE SLUDGE IS SAFER THAN CLASS B SEWAGE SLUDGE.

FACT: The terms "class A" and "class B" only pertain to the allowable levels of 2 indicator pathogens and 10 heavy metals. They have nothing to do with the pathogens that are not tested for or the thousands of chemical contaminants that remain untested. The health effects associated with all types of sewage sludge are related to these unregulated pollutants.

For example, in 2007 Milwaukee Public Schools closed 30 fields and playgrounds after class A sewage sludge that met the "most stringent safety regulations" created numerous health and safety problems. Chemical analyses of Milwaukee’s class A sludge revealed that tons of it, which had already been spread across Milwaukee County, were contaminated with high levels of cancer-causing PCBs. Until the topsoil could be removed and buried at a hazardous waste site, the City was required to fence off the fields where over 16,000 youths played softball, soccer and kickball.
MYTH 7: THE EPA SAYS SPREADING SEWAGE SLUDGE ON LAND IS SAFE.

FACT: Our federal government has defined sewage sludge as a pollutant (40 CFR 230.3(j)). They have sounded an alarm that "the EPA cannot assure the public that current land application practices are protective of human health and the environment." (USEPA 2000, OIG Audit Report, Biosolids Management and Enforcement 2000-P-10)

MYTH 8: SEWAGE SLUDGE DOES NOT MAKE PEOPLE SICK.

FACT: Several published health reports clearly link sludge application sites to the overall decline of health by the surrounding communities. Common physical issues reported by residents across the nation living within a 1 mile radius of sludge dumping grounds are: respiratory problems, eye, nose, and throat irritation, gastrointestinal problems (such as nausea or vomiting), rashes and skin ulcers.

MYTH 9: SEWAGE SLUDGE ONLY AFFECTS PEOPLE LIVING NEAR THE SITES.

FACT: Unless you purchase "USDA certified organic" foods or buy from a local farmer that you know doesn't use sludge, it is likely that you are eating food that has been grown in sewage sludge, drinking milk from cows that have grazed on sludge-covered fields and eating meat from animals that have grazed on sludge-covered fields.

MYTH 10: THERE ARE NO OTHER WAYS TO DISPOSE OF SEWAGE SLUDGE OTHER THAN SPREADING IT ON FARMLAND.

FACT: Sewage sludge can and should be isolated in secured landfills, far away from our families and our food source, until responsible technology is implemented. For more information go to: www.SludgeFacts.org

Provided by Sludge Free UMBT, Inc.

For additional information and updates E-mail us at saynotosynagro@gmail.com
Scientists' open letter on the dangers of biosolids

Tue., Mar 01, 2016

The land disposal of sewage sludge has resulted in significant controversy, and a resistance movement is rightfully building to this misguided policy. Quite simply, the science doesn't support the disposal of sewage sludge across the landscape. The supposed benefits are more than offset by the risks to human and environmental health.

As scientists, we have been watching the issue with increasing concern.

An unimaginably large number of chemical and biological contaminants exist in these materials, and they persist in the product up to, and after, land disposal. Scientific investigations have identified only a tiny fraction of the total contaminant load. We cannot even say with any degree of confidence what the true range of contaminant risk is from the sludge. Call it an "unknown unknown." Because of potential synergistic interactions between the contaminants in the sludge, the risks are largely unknowable.

Most public discussions of the chemical contaminants in sewage sludge involve well-known groups such as heavy metals, flame retardants and pharmaceuticals, among many others. But these are just the contaminants we have identified. To refer to our current knowledge base as the tip of the iceberg would be grossly overestimating how much we actually do know.

Regulators and others — including elected officials — up and down the policy chain appear to lack a real appreciation for the scope of the problem, and the costs of beginning to understand it. If a city were to test the sludge just once for all possible contaminants in the material, the bill would be well into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

You are not going to find a problem if you don't look for it. Of course, over time, that problem may also come looking for you.

To illustrate the difficulties, take just one group of persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic compounds known to be in sewage sludge at high concentrations: brominated flame retardants.

Perhaps the most well-known subclass of the brominated flame retardants are called polybrominated
This is just one contaminant class among many. There are also 209 different members of the PCBs. Similarly, add in another 210 chlorinated dioxin "congeners." And the total number of contaminants in sewage sludge climbs as we begin to consider that effectively all current and legacy industrial chemicals end up in our sewage, and during the treatment process they move into the sludge. If you apply the sludge to the land, we have transferred our toxic effluent onto the landscape.

We are often asked by regulators, politicians and the public what to do about the issue. Give us the tests and we will do them, they claim. In response, we say that not only can you not afford to do all the required tests on your own (the costs must be distributed across entire countries and the international community as best we can, and even that is almost unaffordable), but many of the required tests require advances in technology we do not yet possess.

The complexity discussed so far just touches on the chemical contaminants. Add to that the massive numbers of biological contaminants — bacteria, viruses, prions, etc. — and what we see are the decision makers throwing their hands up in frustration. As they should.

The current and future problem is inconceivably large, particularly since the human population is producing sewage sludge at a rapidly growing rate.

What should we do in response to all these concerns?

Immediately halt the land disposal of sewage sludge as a starting point, and begin either stockpiling or landfilling the material in secure locations with full leachate collection systems until a more responsible means of dealing with the problem is implemented.

In the meantime, the science must continue in an effort to better understand the risks and to develop more effective treatment technologies.

We also see municipalities and regional districts talking about the revenue stream from selling their sludge for land disposal, but are they telling the taxpayers they are supposed to represent about the very large potential risks from the knowing and wilful contamination of lands, waters and the atmosphere that arises from these choices?

Increased health care costs, decreased property values and toxic tort lawsuits have collective liabilities to Big Sludge over time that far outweigh the relatively small cash flows currently coming in to the public purse.

Governments are playing Russian roulette with sewage sludge. Over time, there is a high probability this game will be lost at the public's expense.

Sierra Rayne, PhD, John Werring, MSc, RPBio, Richard Honour, PhD, Steven R. Vincent, PhD.

Sierra Rayne is an independent scientist; John Werring is a senior science and policy adviser for the David Suzuki Foundation; Richard Honour is the executive director for The Precautionary Group; Steven R. Vincent is the Louise Brown Professor of Neuroscience with the department of psychiatry at the University of British Columbia.
The following is provided by the Northampton County Department of Human Services, Children Youth & Families Division, in response to inquiries regarding Sara Packer:

Sara Packer was employed by the Northampton County Department of Human Services, Children, Youth & Families Division. She began as a caseworker in January 2003 and became an adoption supervisor in July 2007.

On January 20, 2010, Ms. Packer was suspended from her employment without pay. At or near that time, a criminal investigation was taking place in Lehigh County. Ms. Packer did not return to the Children, Youth & Families Division. Her employment was officially terminated on April 15, 2010.

At no time during the course of her employment with the Children, Youth & Families Division did Ms. Packer serve as a foster parent for any Northampton County dependent juveniles. Ms. Packer did serve as a foster parent for one Northampton County dependent juvenile from 2000-2001, which was prior to her employment with the County. That individual is now over the age of 21.

Northampton County's Children, Youth & Families Division was not the intermediary for the adoption involving Grace Packer.

After the horrific circumstances surrounding Grace Packer's death became known, questions were posed to Northampton County, as well as many other entities. Northampton County's Children, Youth & Families Division is bound by strict confidentiality statutes and regulations which preclude the release of detailed information concerning this matter. Moreover, the Agency cannot engage in conduct which could compromise criminal investigations or assessments being conducted by other entities.

Information can be provided as to the structure and process that are in place. At the time of Ms. Packer's employment with the County, at the time of her termination, and through to the present, Northampton County's Children, Youth & Families Division has been subject to oversight by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. The County Agency has and will continue to cooperate and comply with the Commonwealth Agency's direction in all matters. This includes any record reviews and/or production of information requested by the Commonwealth Agency.

Whenever a child dies in Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services has the authority to assess the circumstances that caused or contributed to the child's death. A particular process is in place for such an assessment. The County Agency is required to cooperate with such assessments. The results of the Commonwealth Agency's assessment are ultimately made public.

This particular tragedy has drawn public attention to the employees of our Children, Youth & Families Division. The alleged actions of Ms. Packer are contrary to the mission of our County Agency and its dedicated workers. Typically, these people do not receive enough positive attention – or appreciation – for the monumental work that they do. These individuals devote their lives to the safety and well-being of children. On a daily basis, they go willingly into situations that would make most people feel uncomfortable, repulsed, or even frightened. They do the job that very few people have the guts to do, in order to keep children safe. There is no greater contribution to our society and these workers deserve our gratitude.