

Minnesota Legislature

PRESS RELEASE

State Representative Frank Hornstein

437 State Office Building; 651-296-9281, Cell: 612-965 3406 rep.frank.hornstein@house.mn

State Representative Jean Wagenius

449 State Office Building; 651-296-4200
rep.jean.wagenius@house.mn

State Representative Jim Davnie

545 State Office Building; 651-296-0173
rep.jim.davnie@house.mn

November 24, 2009

LEGISLATORS, ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS APPLAUD PCA DENIAL OF GARBAGE BURNER PERMIT AMENDMENT

Minneapolis legislators and several environmental organizations applauded the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's denial of an administrative amendment to expand the Hennepin County downtown garbage incinerator.

This is the second time Hennepin County has been blocked in their effort to expand the burner capacity by 20%. In June, the Minneapolis Planning Commission rejected Hennepin County's application for a Conditional Use Permit for the burner expansion. Covanta then appealed the decision to the City Council which has delayed action on the matter until the MPCA clarifies permit requirements.

"This action by the MPCA gives the public and policy makers the time to come up with other options for handling Hennepin County's garbage in more environmentally responsible ways," said Rep. Jim Davnie, DFL – Minneapolis. "I hope that all players are now willing to come to the table in the public interest and with a broader vision."

Earlier this month, Covanta, the incinerator operator, sought a rarely used administrative amendment from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to railroad the expansion through without further public input. In a November 19 letter the MPCA told Covanta, “The application [for an administrative amendment] is being returned because the requested change does not qualify for an administrative amendment.” The MPCA further stated that the application, “does not include information needed for the MPCA to make a determination” on the permit amendment. The state agency also took the step of warning Covanta to comply with existing laws stating, “MPCA staff would like to caution you to continue to comply with existing permit condition.”

“Hennepin County sought the administrative permit amendment to by-pass public input and proper environmental study,” said Rep. Frank Hornstein, DFL-Minneapolis, a burner opponent. “Given the MPCA action, the City Council should reject the burner permit once and for all and demand that the County increase recycling and composting instead of its reliance on incineration.”

Rep. Jean Wagenius, DFL-Minneapolis, a key legislative environmental leader added, “More burning is not a responsible option when we all need to help reduce greenhouse gases. The responsible option is more composting and recycling.”

Ten Minneapolis legislators authored a letter in the summer urging the City Council and Mayor to reject increased incineration. Environmental organizations with extensive membership in Minneapolis also oppose the burner expansion. Clean Water Action, Sierra Club, Environment Minnesota, Neighbors Against the Burner, and Minneapolis Neighbors for Clean Air, joined the legislators in demanding that Minneapolis oppose increased burning.

“Minneapolis and Hennepin County should be role models for ramping up the reuse, recycling and composting practices that protect our air and water for generations to come,” said Margaret Levin, State Director of the Sierra Club's Northstar Chapter, with 3500 members in Minneapolis. “Burning more garbage at the downtown incinerator would be a step backwards for our clean, renewable energy future. We can do better.”

A City Council panel is expected to debate the burner expansion on December 10.