

## Commissioners approve controversial incinerator project

Originally published June 24, 2009

**By Meg Tully  
News-Post Staff**

The Frederick County Commissioners will move forward with building a regional trash incinerator at the McKinney Industrial site near Buckeystown Pike.

The divisive issue was settled Tuesday with a 3-2 vote. Commissioners Charles Jenkins, David Gray and John L. Thompson Jr. voted for the incinerator, also called a waste-to-energy plant because it will generate electricity. Commissioners Jan Gardner and Kai Hagen voted against it.

Officials representing Carroll County, which plans to help pay for and use the plant, are scheduled to take up the discussion Thursday.

Carroll officials are expected to sign an agreement with Frederick.

It would take about two years after that to obtain state and federal permits for the incinerator.

The plant is intended to stop the county from sending much of its trash to a landfill in Virginia.

About half a dozen people held "No Incinerator" signs outside Winchester Hall as commissioners deliberated Tuesday morning.

Many residents oppose the project, while town and city leaders have embraced it as a solution to the county's long-term waste management needs.

Opponents have vowed to keep fighting the project as it moves forward, especially when it comes time to elect a new board of commissioners in 2010. New commissioners could reverse the decision.

It will cost a maximum of about \$317 million plus \$80 million in contingency costs to build the incinerator.

The maximum price will depend on a power plant construction index, a measure of the cost of building a power plant. Frederick County would be responsible for about \$237 million of the cost.



**Photo by Graham Cullen**

The Frederick County Commissioners have approved the construction of a regional trash incinerator at the McKinney Industrial site at the center of this photo. At far left is Md. 85 with Westview Promenade at the top left. At right is the Monocacy River with parts of the Monocacy National Battlefield close by.

With bond financing charges and interest taken into account, the total project cost would be about \$500 million, with \$301 million from Frederick County, according to the Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority.

The county would get some money from the plant in the form of electricity sales and sales of metals that don't burn, but critics have said it is still too costly.

Gray told meeting attendees he was originally a critic of waste-to-energy.

Within the first seven or eight months of taking office, he changed his mind.

He visited incinerators in Europe and across the U.S., and looked into new alternative technologies such as anaerobic digestion.

"This county can't afford to be a pilot project," he said. "We need to have something that's mature and something we can count on for at least the next 20 years."

He said the county project would be state-of-the-art and have the toughest emissions standards in the world.

"I am quite at peace here, and I think this decision is the right one for Frederick County," Gray said.

Commissioners shouldn't look for one "silver bullet" to solve the problem, said Hagen, who opposes the incinerator.

He advocated a combination of policy and practices to increase recycling, composting and other waste reduction methods. He said society is moving toward those "greener" initiatives.

"The world will be moving in one direction and Frederick County will be moving in the opposite direction," Hagen said. "Though I still believe it won't ever be built."