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Lake County Courthouse and Administrative Complex  
Board Chairman Suzi Schmidt  
18 N. County Street  
Waukegan, IL 60085

Dear Chairman Schmidt:

I hope that you will not consider this letter presumptuous on my part; I am not a Lake County resident. However, a lifelong friend of mine is one of your constituents, and he is familiar with the difficulties I have experienced with regard to trash incineration. As Lake County is once again considering incineration as a waste disposal option, he asked me to share that experience with you.

I was a representative of my county's government (Camden County, NJ) in the early 1990's. A trash incinerator opened in 1991 the City of Camden that, at 500 tpd was designed to handle the wastestream of the entire county. At that time, it was feared that our county would be facing a solid waste crisis, with trash piling in the streets due to the dwindling capacity of our County landfill.

Now, with nearly 20 years of experience with the plant, we know that it has failed on two significant levels: 1) it has always been a severe drain on County finances, and 2) it has resulted in deleterious health effects to the local population, in particular respiratory ailments.

To the first point, the plant became unable to support its debt service in 1997—just 6 years after opening. In order to keep it operating, the County incurred additional debt, and then since 1999, the State has provided \$142 million in grant funds. This year, the State of NJ finds itself in fiscal crisis, and we anticipate that there will be no grant, and the incinerator operators will default on their bond payments next month. In fact, the current Director of the County Freeholder Board invited my advice on how the County might deal with such a failure; I contributed to an ad hoc committee that advised the freeholders on the issue last July. A copy of our report is attached. I read your "State of the County" address regarding the fiscal crisis facing your county; believe me that trash incineration is not an answer to relieve financial pressures.

To the second point, there has been a dramatic increase in the level of reported asthma, emphysema, and other respiratory ailments reported in elementary schools in Camden since the opening of the incinerator plant. Camden is an impoverished city, so the families that are affected by this exposure tend to be too poor to move away. Naturally, it is difficult to establish a probative link between plant operations, and the spike in

respiratory illness in children; however, the residents of the community are convinced of the connection, and health officials are at a loss to explain it otherwise.

These failures simply scratch the surface of reasons why Lake County should avoid waste incineration; perhaps the most important reason that you should not pursue it, is that every ton of waste that you burn will represent some share of recyclable/compostable material lost forever. That is truly wasteful. Clearly, recycling/composting/re-use, and limited landfilling is the best approach to apply to waste management.

I can't overstate the negative impacts of the waste incineration process, and I encourage you to avoid making the mistake that Camden County did. I would be happy to provide you with more information, if you have interest. I wish you good luck in reaching a better solution to the challenge of waste management for your county.

Very truly yours,



Mark S. Lohbauer

Attachment: Report to Camden County Freeholders on Solid Waste