

Nell Pierce

The MPCA needs to include a plan to shut down the HERC ♦ it is far past its expiration date! It was a big win when the legislature directed the county to create a shut down plan, but that can only be executed with your support as the MPCA. I'm disappointed to read that you believe that the HERC reduces environmental risks and doesn't carry legacy impacts for later clean ups; the indisputable truth is that people who live around the HERC have been breathing in tons of toxic ash/pollutants over the years, resulting in dire respiratory problems...and airborne pollution is some of the hardest to clean up. A recent study also found that any parks build on former waste incineration sites can be hotspots for lead. Experts and scientists increasingly agree that burning trash is dangerous and even worse than landfills when it comes to health impacts ♦ especially on those who live nearby. Given the site of the HERC, it's predominantly low-income and Black and Brown folks who are being forced to live with these health risks. This is environmental racism, especially when it is folks in wealthy neighborhoods who are creating the vast majority of the waste being burned.

I see that you "understand and acknowledge the concerns of potential impacts expressed by residents near WTE facilities," and that you would consider taking down incinerators once another system is developed. However, so long as Hennepin County is profiting off the waste and depending on incinerators for revenue to fund environmental programs, there is little incentive to create alternatives. The only real incentive to create alternatives is a strong commitment to shut down the HERC. We are in a climate crisis. Until we actively stop the harm, we cannot heal.

I was also shocked when I read that the goal for waste reduction over the next 20 years is only 5%. Our lives are at stake. At that slow rate, we are sealing a very dark fate for all of us. Let's please align ourselves with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and set a goal of at least 50% waste reduction by 2030 and 75% by 2042, along with a waste diversion goal of 90% by 2042 ♦ which would qualify us as zero waste community. We can rise to this challenge if we start NOW.

It is insulting that this plan claims to have been developed through community engagement when only one meeting was conducted per county - half of them during the day when people were at work. In order to truly include the voices of those most impacted by environmental injustice, these meetings need to be more frequent and at different times of the day to accommodate different work schedules. I would also strongly urge for there to be interpretation for various languages.

Finally, I'd love to see a plan for a decentralized, closed loop of community composting ♦ where people who compost actually experience the benefits. This will increase participation in those practices and keep wealth in communities. This also creates opportunities for small-scale composters to build relationships with the people right around them.

I am terrified and enraged by the climate crisis. I live with an 18 month old and I get a knot in my stomach when I think about the air he will be breathing in 2042 if we don't take drastic action right now. Please take a stand ♦ when you do, the community is

here to back you.