
Harkins explains opposition to tire-to-energy plant

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After reading your editorial "Region needs tire plant facts" (Erie Times News, July 29), I felt I needed to respond.

My conclusion of opposing the construction of the plant was made only after the following steps were addressed:

1. Attending all of the meetings, which were open to the public.
2. Listening to those from Erie Renewable Energy LLC and their vague description of what this plant would entail.

At this meeting, it was proposed that Erie Energy would warehouse these tires on the Erie site.

Even with the best intentions and most sophisticated sprinkler systems, I immediately thought of the catastrophe that could occur if the building caught fire, and what effects would be faced by neighbors and the environment, and also firefighters and other safety officials.

3. I am extremely concerned about the transportation of tires, both by rail and truck, through Erie, as well as into my district from other areas.
4. I researched www.energy-justice.net/tires, and while this may be seen as only one side of the story, this Web site does give food for thought of what we may be exposed to, should this plant come to fruition.

I personally believe this Web site gives an in-depth background of the potential pollutants, and what they mean to our environment. Please keep in mind the proposed plant is not a building that will burn tires. The proposal is to vaporize tires to generate energy.

5. I spoke with two people from Waste Management who assured me they had no affiliation with this plant concept, nor the people who are proposing it.

At one point at the March meeting, it was stated that Waste Management would be providing the tires if the plant were in operation.

6. I spoke with people in proximity of the plant, whose lives will be directly affected by its construction.

I must say that I was not a big fan of this plant from the start.

And after much thought, reading and research, I believe we can do much better with this site.

I recently spoke with Greg Rubino, who has been working with the plant developers, and offered to work with him and neighbors to come up with a concept for something that is more workable for all parties involved.

I fully support Gov. Ed Rendell's alternative-energy plan. I even went to West Chester with a group of other state representatives to lend my support for Pennsylvania to take the lead on the energy front.

I just don't think the site, being on Lake Erie and near homes, schools and sports facilities, is right for this plant.

State Rep. Pat Harkins, Erie, D-1st Dist.