



**Applied
Environmental
Services, LLC**

P.O. Box 174 • Athens, GA 30603-0174

August 16, 2013

Honorable Nancy Denson, Mayor and Commissioners
Athens-Clarke County Unified Government
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Re: ACC Mayor/Staff's 6/25/13 Dump Meeting at Billups Grove Baptist Church and 8/22/13 Agenda Item

Honorable Mayor and County Commissioners:

As you know, I spoke to all of you during the public comment period at the conclusion of the August 6, 2013 commission meeting. My comments focused on the meeting that Athens-Clarke County (ACC) mayor and assistant manager Blaine Williams requested at the Billups Grove Baptist Church on June 25, 2013, about on-going dump-related problems. During my public comments, I also submitted into the commission record a hard copy of the written transcript that I compiled while attending that Billups Grove Baptist Church dump meeting. For your convenience, a summary of my comments follows and a copy of the transcript of that meeting is included with this letter, as **Attachment A**. Please also ensure that this letter is placed in the official record related the commission meeting.

A. Summary of My Comments at the 8/6/13 County Commission Meeting

On June 25, 2013, Mayor Nancy Denson, Assistant Manager Blaine Williams and ACC Solid Waste staff met with representatives of the Dunlap Road community and Billups Grove Church, at that church. They only discussed the stench from the ACC dump-site, located adjacent to that church and Dunlap Road community. The meeting was requested by ACC, but ACC did not record or transcribe the meeting. I transcribed the meeting. My draft transcript was reviewed and revised for accuracy by the pastor of the Billups Grove Church and other church representatives who attended the meeting, as well as by Blaine Williams. In addition to providing a copy of that transcript and requests for resolution for the record of the August 6, 2013 commission meeting, I wanted all of our ACC commissioners to be aware of this ongoing problem.

During that meeting at the Billups Grove Church, Mr. Williams stated that the "compost" is mixed with "biosolids" and implied that biosolids contain only "bacteria like you would find in any stream." He also stated that the "waste-activated sludge" – another name for "biosolids" - is tested each year and that ACC's "compost" made from that municipal sewage sludge is "free of pathogens."

Mr. Williams did not provide a copy of those annual tests to anyone at the meeting. During the meeting I asked Mr. Williams if he would email a copy of those results to me and he stated that he would. After the meeting I sent several emails to Mr. Williams, reminding him that he had promised to send me a copy of the annual test results from the sewage sludge. **Despite my repeated requests, Mr. Williams still has not sent me a copy of those results.**

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During the meeting at the church, Mr. Williams stated that ACC gives “a sheet of the results for the compost to everyone who buys it.” **I know that statement is not true** because I witnessed **no** results sheets given to **any** of the people who bought the “composted” sewage sludge during the two days that I observed a line of people paying for and receiving that “composted” sewage sludge during “Compost Awareness Week.”

Also during that meeting, Mr. Williams stated that the “composted” sewage sludge “smells” but that it is “**safe**.” Nothing provided by ACC staff - before, during or after that meeting with members of the church and community living adjacent to ACC’s dump - proves that the “composted” sewage sludge is “**safe**.” Additionally, ACC staff still has not addressed the safety concerns of the “composted” sewage sludge. As I have stated previously, **ACC’s municipal water is tested every 4 hours, but ACC’s “composted” sewage sludge is tested only every 3 months and Salmonella is the only pathogen currently tested from ACC’s sludge “compost.”**

At least five times during the June meeting at the church, Dunlap Road resident Jessie Clarke stated that he can’t breathe regarding the contaminated air in his neighborhood adjacent to the ACC dump. Please refer to the transcript in **Attachment A** to review his statements.

I met with Nevel Ollie and Charles Nash at Billups Grove Church on August 13, 2013, regarding yet another problem related to the ACC dump. After less than an hour at the church I was gasping and choking and coughing so severely that I barely could speak. The wind was not blowing while this was occurring and I couldn’t even smell the stench from the dump. I was not having any problems breathing until I arrived at the church. So I have personal knowledge that the stench from the dump is only one of the many serious problems associated with the dump.

In case you aren’t aware, the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) of the Georgia Department of Environmental Protection (DNR) already confirmed that the dump has contaminated the vicinity with vinyl chloride. **They also have confirmed that serious health problems from vinyl chloride are not restricted to people drinking water contaminated with vinyl chloride, but also from breathing vinyl chloride.**

B. Public Deception Regarding the Safety of the “Composted” Sewage Sludge

I want to clarify that my statements at the June church meeting (included in that transcript) and at last week’s commission meeting about the false statement Mr. Williams made regarding ACC giving “a sheet of the results for the compost to everyone who buys it” were **not** meant to imply that Mr. Williams was lying. I realize that Mr. Williams is a relatively new employee and may be accepting as true the information he is being told by subordinate staff. As I stated in my previous comment letter, the public announcements during the half-price sale of the “compost” also made the same false claim that people would receive a copy of the test results when they purchased the “compost.” I assume that as the Solid Waste Director, Mr. Corley should be assuring that the information Mr. Williams has about dump activities is accurate, so that the information Mr. Williams provides to the public on behalf of ACC is the unassailable truth.

More serious public deception occurred in the public announcements that ACC mailed to ACC residents publicizing the “Compost Sale” from May 6-12, 2013. This announcement made **no** reference to the fact that the “compost” was made from municipal sewage sludge. A copy of that ACC announcement is included as **Attachment B**. Presumably, as the new Assistant Manager in charge of the Solid Waste Department, Mr. Williams reviewed and approved that announcement, but failed to ensure that it was blatantly clear to the public that they were purchasing and distributing “compost” made from municipal sewage sludge.

During the June meeting at the church, Mr. Williams only addressed the stench from the dump, rather than the myriad other dump-related problems, including the increasing number of health-related problems and deaths of people in proximity to the dump. When I asked Mr. Williams at the church meeting when the other serious problems would be addressed, he replied, “We are just addressing odors now” (page 6 of the transcript). Please note that those problems have spanned decades, since at least the reign of Mayor Doc Eldridge.

Also during the June meeting at the church, Pastor Willis emphasized that they had endured the additional problems from the “composted” sewage sludge for approximately three years and that they expected ACC to “go the extra mile to fix the problem” (page 6 of the transcript). During all those years, Mr. Corley has been blaming that stench on chicken manure, reportedly spread on property west of Billups Grove Church. That chicken manure was refuted as the source of the stench immediately following the June 25, 2013 meeting in the church. While the mayor and other attendees were standing in the church parking lot talking, a divine wind began to blow from the east, where the dump is located. The mayor and other attendees smelled the stench while standing in the church parking lot.

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Although Mr. Corley pointed to the west of the church, in the direction of where the chicken manure is spread, the mayor refuted that and pointed directly toward where ACC's open-air "composting" of sewage sludge is occurring as the origin of the stench.

As I indicated above, the **only** pathogen currently tested from ACC's "composted" sewage sludge is *Salmonella* and those tests occur **only** once every 3 months. I am providing a copy of the 2012 publication by Dr. Brooke titled, "*Stenotrophomonas maltophilia*: an Emerging Global Opportunistic Pathogen" as **Attachment C**. This publication provides extensive documentation of this serious multi-drug resistant, environmental bacterial pathogen that has been identified in water treatment and distribution systems and wastewater treatment plants. This pathogen also is capable of surviving common purification/sterilization treatments, such as chlorination and UV treatment and can infect humans by being inhaled and entering through the skin. Crude mortality rates from this pathogen range from 14 to 69%. The type of *S. maltophilia* infections include respiratory tract/pneumonia; acute exacerbations of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD); bacteremia; biliary sepsis; infections of the endophthalmitis; eye infections; endocarditis; and meningitis. **Brooke's publication explains how and why this pathogen can be present when other so-called "indicator" bacteria, such as *Salmonella* and *E. coli*, are not identified in samples.**

Dr. Brooke's publication about this serious pathogen had not been published when ACC applied for and received state permits to "compost" sewage sludge for widespread and undocumented public distribution. That means that Mr. Williams' statements during the June meeting at the church that this is "permitted by the state" have **no** relevance to the safety – or, more accurately, the lack of safety – of that "composted" sewage sludge.

The potential contamination of ACC's "composted" sewage sludge with multi-drug resistant pathogens that ACC is **not** testing for is not the only safety problem. You will recall that I also provided public comments to all of you during the final opportunity for citizen input at the July 2, 2013 commission meeting (agenda item "J."). Those comments focused on the toxicity of the industrial fluoride that ACC is dumping into our municipal water supply. That is described in detail in the 2013 publication by Dr. Sauerheber titled, "Physiologic Conditions Affect Toxicity of Ingested Industrial Fluoride." After my public comments, I provided a copy of that publication to ACC's clerk for the official record. To ensure all of you have a copy of that publication, I have included a copy as **Attachment D**.

That publication focuses on the human toxicity of drinking and eating water, other beverages and food contaminated with the specific form of fluoride that ACC uses to fluoridate our water. The toxicity of this industrial fluoride extends beyond our tap water, that we drink and are exposed to while bathing and showering. Toxic residuals of this industrial fluoride should be expected in the sewage sludge that is being "composted" at the dump, as well as in the treated effluent that ACC is discharging into our streams. **The state does not require municipalities to use toxic industrial waste for fluoridation and the "tests" that ACC staff conducts on the "composted" sewage sludge once every three months do not include tests for this toxic industrial fluoride, further compromising the "safety" of this "composted" sewage sludge.**

C. Contact People Representing Billups Grove Church and Dunlap Road Community

During ACC's dump meeting at the Billups Grove Church on June 25, 2013, Mr. Williams asked the attendees who the contact person would be after Pastor Willis' pending retirement. Nevel Ollie, who is one of the church's Deacons, responded that he and Charles Nash would be the contacts regarding resolution of the problems with the dump (page 6 of the transcript).

On August 13, 2013, I verified that neither Deacon Ollie nor Mr. Nash has received **any** response from anyone representing ACC regarding how all of the dump-related problems are going to be fixed. Deacon Ollie and Mr. Nash are waiting for an official response from the Mayor and Commissioners indicating what ACC has done since that June meeting at the church and a detailed plan of action regarding how and when all of the problems related to ACC's dump will be resolved. Their addresses are:

Deacon Nevel Ollie
560 Clarke Road
Winterville, GA 30683

Mr. Charles Nash
1276 Walter Sam Road
Winterville, GA 30683

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Requested Action:

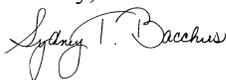
Once again, I am joining other victims of the on-going harmful ACC dump activities to request that all of you take action immediately to halt composting of sewage sludge until staff provides proof that “composted” sewage sludge is “safe.” **I also am requesting that at the 7 PM agenda-setting meeting on August 22, 2013, that Mayor Denson place these ACC dump issues on the ACC agenda for the September ACC Commission meeting and that the mayor honor her campaign promise to make ACC documents available on line for increased transparency of staff’s actions and inactions.** Examples of the documents that should be posted on line for transparency include the following:

- a. ACC’s 10/30/92 agreement with the Dunlap Road residents stating that the ACC dump would not be expanded;
- b. ACC’s contract with the consulting firm that concluded the ACC dump should be expanded;
- c. application submitted to the Georgia EPD/DNR to expand the ACC dump;
- d. ACC’s contract with the consulting firm that concluded that ACC sludge should be “composted” and sold to the public;
- e. ACC’s application submitted to EPD/DNR for open-air “composting” of municipal sewage sludge at the previously permitted ACC dump;
- f. permit issued by EPD/DNR for open-air “composting” of municipal sewage sludge at the previously permitted ACC dump;
- g. ACC’s contract with the consulting firm that concluded that ACC should “capture” methane from ACC dump;
- h. permit issued by EPD/DNR to “capture” methane at the previously permitted ACC dump;
- i. ACC’s proposed/final budgets and all line items for ACC Budget;
- j. ACC’s contract with the company supplying industrial-grade fluoride for fluoridation of ACC municipal water;
- k. all of the monitoring/testing information and data related to ACC’s original dump, current dump, methane “recovery” and sewage sludge “composting.”

Following is a list of items that I am requesting be addressed prior to the August 22, 2013 agenda-setting meeting or during the requested agenda item for the September commission meeting:

1. an official response to me, Deacon Ollie and Mr. Nash, preferably from the Mayor and Commissioners, indicating what ACC has done since that June meeting at the church and a detailed plan of action regarding how and when all of the problems related to ACC’s dump will be resolved;
2. elimination of all airborne contaminants and stench from the sewage sludge composting and dump (**NOTE: ACC sewage sludge also has been used as “cover” material for the dump, resulting in ADDITIONAL airborne contaminants and stench**);
3. municipal water, free of all contaminants including fluoride and arsenic, provided to all homes, churches, farms and other occupied property in proximity to the ACC dump and compensation for all medical effects of these community members that may be related to ACC’s existing dump and co-located activities;
4. elimination of sources of methane from the ACC dump by diverting ALL organic material and by composting only the non-toxic food garbage (**NOTE: methane is a greenhouse gas approximately 75 times more potent than CO₂ that will result in more severe global climate disruption to the detriment of residents in Georgia, other states and other countries**); and
5. construction of a facility, similar to the Spittelau Waste Incineration Plant, to incinerate ACC’s toxic sewage sludge rather than “composting” the toxic sewage sludge and expanding the dump.

Sincerely,



Sydney T. Bacchus, Ph. D., Hydroecologist
appliedenvirserve@gmail.com

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Attachments:

- A. Transcript of ACC Mayor/Staff's 6/25/13 Dump Meeting at Billups Grove Baptist Church
- B. May 6-12, 2013 Compost Awareness Week Announcement
- C. 2012 Brooke publication, "*Stenotrophomonas maltophilia*: an Emerging Global Opportunistic Pathogen"
- D. 2013 Sauerheber publication, "Physiologic Conditions Affect Toxicity of Ingested Industrial Fluoride"

cc:

Jean Spratlin, ACC Clerk
Alan Reddish, ACC Manager (Alan.Reddish@athensclarkecounty.com)
Blaine Williams, ACC Assistant Manager (Blaine.Williams@athensclarkecounty.com)
Jim Corley, ACC Solid Waste Director (Jim.Corley@athensclarkecounty.com)
Jack Ollie, Billups Grove Baptist Church, Deacon Chairman
Nevel Ollie, Billups Grove Baptist Church Dump Resolution, Deacon and Co-Representative
Charles Nash, Billups Grove Baptist Church Dump Resolution, Co-Representative & NEGCEHC Co-Chair
Jill Jennings-McElheney, Northeast Georgia Children's Environmental Health Coalition Vice Pres. (NEGCEHC)
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