

**Your Turn**

Paul Connett

Guest columnist

A dangerous site for battery plant

Since 1985, I have been helping communities fight incinerator projects throughout the USA, Canada and 68 other countries. Because of this experience, I am very concerned about the lithium-ion battery recycling plant being at the corner of Clark Street and Robble Avenue in Endicott.

The “recycling” process involves heating the batteries in a rotary kiln to a temperature of 1,100 degrees Fahrenheit and then burning the gases produced. This operation is akin to a dual chamber incinerator, which will inevitably emit a number of hazardous substances, including dioxins, hydrogen fluoride and nanoparticles.

We cannot assume that the air pollution control equipment will be 100% effective all the time. That is where the real problem comes in: This is a totally inappropriate place to operate such a plant. There are homes and the Little League baseball field within a few feet of the plant. Incredibly, there has been no formal accident analysis, even though lithium-ion batteries pose a well-known fire risk.

The typography is unsuitable: Many homes are above the height of the stack. In addition, there are people in the area who are still suffering ill health from the old IBM plant, and they should not be exposed to any more pollution. Some of the substances emitted are cancer-causing. In my view, it is unconscionable to operate this facility at this site.

The DEC air permit is defective. They used only a single dioxin measurement made by the company itself. As far as predicting how much dioxin is going to be emitted over an extended period of time, this is scientifically useless. People familiar with incineration know that dioxin emissions can vary by a factor of 1,000 during the course of a single day! Such increases occur during start-up, shutdown and upset conditions. This battery facility will have one start-up and shutdown every day.

In many European countries, incinerators are required to use four-week sampling dioxins — these four-week samples do pick up emissions during upset conditions, as well as start-up and shutdown. These tests should have been done in South Korea before this plant was endorsed by the mayor.

A report from Barton and Loquidice (B&L) admitted the dioxin emissions number was inadequate, but they said that better testing can be done after the plant has been built — which is, of course, far too late for the community.

Unfortunately, I missed the public meetings organized by the company. However, now that I have learned more, I believe that this project is being rushed through at an unseemly pace (and during a pandemic!). Many people in Endicott are only now finding out about it.

I urge the trustees to put off their vote on zoning on Monday (which would allow the facility to go forward) until the lockdown is over, so that we can have a real public hearing where experts from both sides can explain the process and discuss the alternatives. Meanwhile, I urge citizens to go to the website No-BurnBroome.com and read the group’s position paper, and sign the petition to stop this zoning change.

Paul Connett is a Binghamton resident.