

Court of Common Council

CITY OF HARTFORD
550 MAIN STREET
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06103



From The Office of Councilman, James Sanchez

December 6, 2017

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE AND ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

CT General Assembly

300 Capital Avenue

Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Committee Members,

Hartford is home to the Capitol Region's vital soft and hard infrastructure: it is home to more service-based organizations, hospitals, and non-profit organizations than any other town or city within the State of Connecticut. We are proud to host organizations which work to strengthen our region. However, when a piece of infrastructure will harm Hartford's citizens, Hartford's City Council must support "its placement somewhere else". The trash to energy plant operated by the Materials Innovation and Recycling Authority (MIRA) is such a project: it must be removed from Hartford. For decades, this plant has produced deleterious health effects to Hartford's community, has failed to protect our natural environment and has failed to provide Hartford with equitable revenue. The site is a rare and critical location for economic development for a city otherwise starved for developable properties.

Hartford has long been the dumping grounds of this region, because of strong lobbying for an entity to bring in trash from other towns to protect their back yards, because of the high population of minorities in our city that may mistakenly seem by some as to have no voice in these types of decisions. Well, they do have a voice and I will tell you that my colleagues and I are their voice. Now is the time Hartford will stand up for itself and say No to continue to be the bearer of the burden for our Capitol Region and the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) municipalities of Connecticut. Hartford must not lose this opportunity to develop the site to protect its population from continuing health hazards and economic deprivation.

We are not overstating the deleteriousness of MIRA's effect on citizen health:

- Hartford has the third highest number of emergency department visits and second highest mortality rate in the state for adults and children with asthma, Community Needs Assessment in Hartford's Children;

- Hartford also has the highest medical services utilization rates in the state and one of the highest in the country;
- Hartford's medical services utilization rates is 241.7 per 100,000; whereas the national average is 10.78 per 100,000. Zip code 06114, where MIRA is located, is one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city and has the second highest recorded number of Medicaid insured children with asthma in Hartford.

Cities and towns that surround Hartford have successfully lobbied against having such a plant placed within their borders; however, when Hartford a city known for its racial and ethnic diversity, makes these claims, backed by strong statistical evidence, Hartford's case is ignored.

Why is that? It is because the environmental and economic benefits for other towns are greater than the "commitment", the State of Connecticut as a whole, has to improve and protect the well-being of Hartford's citizens!!

This seems to be the case. During the presentation given to Hartford, the three proponents attempted to persuade us that trash-to-energy plants are positive economic engines even with negligible effects on the environment and Hartford residents.

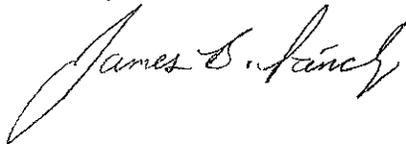
Furthermore, there is an apparent lack of diversity within the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP and MIRA) which are positioned and authorized to again decide on major issues that will impact the City of Hartford and its residents.

The percentage of people of color, if any at all, serving in DEEP and MIRA remains strikingly low. How does a department of the State consider what is best for a town or city when there is absolutely no representation of its residents?

Thus far, DEEP acted with a top-down, 'we know what is best for Hartford' attitude. The Hartford City Council is committed to restoring this most important site for the advancement of the Hartford citizens' interests and an enhancement of its shrinking tax base. There is no justification for retaining the failed MIRA bureaucracy as an obstacle to the city's opportunity to development of this South Meadow Property.

I strongly oppose the continued operation of the MIRA facility or any other operator in the South Meadows.

Sincerely,



James Sánchez
Councilman
Hartford Court of Common Council