

# Odenton residents make last ditch effort to stop Chesapeake Terrace Rubble Landfill from receiving permit

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About 300 people gathered at an Annapolis hotel ballroom Thursday night to signal their opposition to the proposed Chesapeake Terrace Rubble Landfill in Odenton.

The rubble landfill would store demolition waste including steel, concrete and bricks, construction debris like lumber, plaster and insulation, household appliances and asbestos on a 144-acre plot. The project, in the works since 1988, has completed all requisite steps to receive a permit, according to [a Maryland Department of the Environment factsheet](#). On Jan. 25, the state agency notified county residents with a post in The Capital it had tentatively decided to approve the permit applied for by National Waste Managers to build the landfill.

Dozens of residents said they oppose the landfill because of fears that storing asbestos could lead to toxic chemicals in their drinking water. They also complained that children, who will eventually attend the now-under-construction West County Elementary School in Odenton, could be exposed to the chemicals and the exhaust and noise from large trucks.

While Odenton residents have been sounding the alarm about the landfill for the past 35 years, the [project came under recent scrutiny](#) when Republican candidate for county executive Jessica Haire received about \$250,000 in campaign donations last year from various people and organizations affiliated with Halle Companies. The Halle family owns National Waste Managers. No representatives from the company attended the meeting.

Haire and County Executive Steuart Pittman said they [opposed the project](#).

The first resident to speak Thursday night was Ed Riehl of Odenton, who serves as chairman of Two Rivers Residents-Landfill Opposition.

“Of the people who are here today, I ask for a show of hands: How many are opposed to the development of the Chesapeake Terrace Rubble Landfill?” Riehl asked.

The air flooded with hands.

“By a show of hands, is there anyone here today that is in favor of the development of the landfill?” he asked.

No one raised a hand.

“We all know of stories around the country of contaminated well water from industrial activities. It may not occur until several years in the future,” Riehl said. “How can MDE, in good conscience, ignore this hazard to the public health, safety and comfort of the citizens of Maryland?”

Erin Coates' family has lived on a property near the proposed landfill for several decades and has been protesting the project since it began. She brought with her a letter her grandmother wrote in the late 1990s opposing the project.

"We're continuing the same battle," Coates said.

If the landfill is constructed, Coates said she fears her neighbors will lose "their quality of life — their property values diminished, their families marred by dust, noise and the risk of hundreds of dump trucks a day passing through their peaceful property where their children live, whose wells will forever become untrustworthy and for those who will ultimately get risked when, and I said when, not if, there is a leak or environmental issue."

Anne Arundel County Council member Julie Hummer, who represents Odenton, and Maryland Sen. Jim Rosapepe, who represents parts of West County at the state level, voiced opposition to the project.

"All the environmental and safety concerns regarding this are real and will directly impact everyone in this room," Hummer said. "They will speak to the dangers the project will bring to the thousands of residents in the city by allowing massive truck traffic on a roadway that is not designed for industrial enterprise. They will speak of the potential damage to a historic underground railroad location [St. John AME Zion Church], ballooning of local waterways that flow into the Patuxent River and the absolute absurdity of placing a landfill next to an elementary school."

Paul Stratman, a geological consultant, and the lone representative for the project, explained the methods by which the waste will be stored. After Stratman's presentation, Rosapepe noted that sometimes these procedures fail and it's not a risk the residents and families of kids who will soon attend the new elementary school want to take.

"Not everything that people say should work does work," Rosapepe said. "It would be great if everything worked perfectly, the challenge here, why we are opposing this project, is the risk outweighs the value."

Residents have until May 1 to submit comments about the landfill to the Maryland Department of the Environment.

The department will then review each one and try to resolve them as best it can. If the department isn't able to respond, the project applicant can respond, said Andrew Grenzer of the department's solid waste operations division.

"Whether these comments rise to the level of denying the permit, I don't know at this moment," Grenzer said.

If the permit is granted, the project will then be in the hands of the county. According to Anne Arundel County Attorney Greg Swain, developers had to obtain special zoning approval to build rubble landfills back in the 1990s when the project began. It was granted that special approval by the county's board of appeals under certain conditions, one being that the developers needed to obtain a certain access point to build the landfill.

"We eventually acquired that site [the access point] for the elementary school. It's now owned by the Board of Education," Swain said. "What they do in reaction to that, I can't say. We'll just have to wait and see."