

Good evening. I'm Melissa McCullough. I'm a retired environmental scientist with a three-decade career at the USEPA, a community sustainability specialist and a member of the Chapel Hill Town Council, to though I am here tonight representing myself.

There is little I could add to the science and environmental comments of the Southern Environmental Law Center or the Sierra Club, although I echo them completely!

Instead, I want to address community issues.

This is an old problem. The surrounding neighborhoods have had to breathe the pollution from this plant since decades before there were even air pollution laws. This is an environmental justice issue for the historically Black neighborhoods, where the people who built and served our university have lived for generations. Chapel Hill is already suffering from the UNC's mishandled coal ash waste from decades ago..... Back when they didn't KNOW how bad it was.

UNC is at a turning point that mirrors the rest of the world -- how to assure necessary heat and power into a future where: coal is dirty, finite and increasingly expensive; fracked gas is not better for the climate, and; renewable options aren't always easy to retrofit into complex existing systems.

We all know this isn't easy.

But not having an easy answer doesn't justify this technological detour that will only delay actually finding a good solution. The requested permit would allow burning pellets indefinitely. But, the existing plant is a known and controlled problem.

This permit application offers NO way to reliably estimate the resulting pollution or the health and environmental impacts. We already know that big problems are created when decisions are knowingly made in ignorance of how bad the problem could be, for example, the coal ash under our police station, near Bolin creek.

The Bottom line is this:

- Although ostensibly for climate purposes, this action would barely improve greenhouse gas emissions;
- The emissions of PFAS would be unquantified and uncontrolled;
- Emissions of other toxic air pollutants would increase and affect the health of the surrounding community;
- There would still be waste materials, but now of unknown composition.

I urge DEQ to reject this permit application, OR for UNC to withdraw it, because we are not assured that the marginal benefits of it are worth the potential impacts

If the University wants to be a good neighbor and global citizen, they need to find a permanent, clean, and sustainable solution.