

# Tauntonians split on supporting or opposing gasification plant, want more info

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TAUNTON — Everyone from city councilors to labor unions to environmental groups have weighed in on Aries Clean Technologies' proposed gasification plant.

But do Tauntonians want a facility that deals with the region's sewage sludge and could bring in millions of dollars to the city, or are they worried about potential health and environmental impacts of the proposed plant at the former landfill on East Britannia Street?

It depends on who you ask.

## Alison Rosa wants impartial information



Taunton resident Alison Rosa, 43, said she feels there are not enough studies and information on the type of facility Aries is proposing to be confident that it wouldn't have a negative environmental and public health impact.

"When you even try to research the Aries plant itself, there's not enough background information to let you know whether it's good or bad. So to me, I'm going to think bad," she said.

Rosa said she is also concerned that so much of the information about the plant is coming from and through Aries, which has a stake in portraying it well.

If anything would make her more open to the facility, she said, it would be more independent research and more proposed benefits to the community.

## **James Dufresne skeptical city is taking 'honest look'**

James Dufresne, 51, has lived on Arthur Street close to the former landfill on East Britannia Street where the plant would be built for 10 years. He said that while there have been no traffic issues where he lives, there was often a issue with noise, and when the weather got warm, the scent of waste from the landfill wafted over.

"We would go out on the back deck, and sometimes you couldn't really stay out there because it's just not a pleasant smell," he said.

If the plant is built, the same community that dealt with the environmental issues caused by the landfill would also be dealing with any traffic, public health, noise and smell issues that result from the gasification plant's operation.

Dufresne said he is very skeptical about the plant. He said he feels the city hasn't been open with the public about it, only bringing much attention to it after the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office comment period was closed.

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"If this company has what they claim they have, this is like their silver bullet for biosolids," he said. "Why would you be hiding it in the back office?"

And given environmental and public health groups' concerns about pollutants like per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), which are found in sewage sludge and cause adverse health effects like cancer and immune problems, Dufresne said he worries that city officials aren't taking an honest look at the proposal and aren't ready for possible unintended consequences.

"I think the administration's need for a continuing revenue stream is giving them a blind spot when it comes to only seeing what they want to see in this project," he said.

## Andrew Korzeniewski is cautiously in favor

But not everyone is so skeptical of the plant. Andrew Korzeniewski, 21, used to live on Broadway in Raynham close to the landfill. While traffic was bad for him, being so close to the highway, he said the smell didn't bother him after he got used to it over the years.

For now, he said, he is in favor of the the gasification plant.

"The trash isn't going anywhere anytime soon, and from the research I have done there won't be any severe negative effects on the environment. I understand the importance of minimizing PFAS production, and it seems this plant does so. Regardless, I don't think this can be any worse for the environment than the burning mountain of trash we used to have," he wrote in an email.

Still, Korzeniewski said, the plant could have an adverse effect on the environment over time, and the city should do its due diligence investigating this.

"If it's harmful for the environment then we should absolutely find better alternatives," he wrote.

## Danielle Spratt sees more cons than pros



Danielle Spratt, 40, lives on Whittenton Street near the former landfill and said she is bothered by the smell coming off it.

"It emanates a nasty, dumpy smell throughout the whole neighborhood. And it gets to the point where in the summertime, you can't have your windows open," she said. "And it gets to the point sometimes where you can't even have your air conditioners on. You can't enjoy your pool, you can't enjoy your yard."

With COVID-19 distracting everyone, Spratt said, she's worried that city officials could push

the plant through without neighbors noticing and recognizing the potential health and environmental risks.

"I just feel like nobody's been educated on what's going on, and I think there's more cons than there are pros," she said.

## **Lindsay Hoy worries about air pollution**



Lindsay Hoy, 33, lives on Valencourt Street near the former landfill site, and also said sometimes it would stink.

But Hoy is most worried about potential toxins that could come out of the smokestack of the Aries facility.

She said she's very careful about what she eats and consumes, making sure it is healthy and natural. But if the air is polluted, everyone is being exposed uncontrollably.

"You don't want to put stuff in the air that we wouldn't want to put in our bodies," she said.

## James Cook leans towards yes...but wants to know more



James Cook, 46, who lives in East Taunton, said he's leaning towards supporting the plant.

"We need to shift to greener technologies. The concerns about environmental and health impacts are legitimate, though, and I would like to see extensive independent studies addressing these concerns," he wrote over email.

Cook said he'd like to see research from existing similar plants to see what issues have come up.

"Even if some of the impact is suspected circumstantial evidence with no known direct causality, anything that is even remotely linked...should be examined carefully," he wrote.

"This is a major decision. If approved, it's not easily reversed."

## Timothy Silvia says it's too risky



Progressive Taunton City Council candidate Timothy Silvia, 30, said he is against the plant.

"Too much risk is involved with this project. Some see dollar signs, but I haven't heard anyone ask if they did an abatement clause to the contract, which would see Taunton get less and less revenue year by year," he wrote in a statement.

Silvia also said he is unconvinced that Aries's gasification technology can destroy PFAS the way the company claims.

"We need 100% destruction of PFAS, or else we are harming the health of the residents of Taunton. What we need to do is hybrid methods such as low-heat anaerobic digestion technology, composting, multi-lane recycling systems," he wrote.

"I am continuously researching and hearing from both sides still, and I have too much concern to back this project."

## **Felicia Augusto is excited about the new jobs**

Felicia Augusto, 26, said she feels good about the plant given that it will create 30 new jobs.

"It's environmentally friendly and possibly going to open jobs! I'm excited for the future of clean air and water for Taunton!"

While Tauntonians may be split on supporting or opposing the plant, one thing is clear: both sides feel more independent research should be done into Aries's gasification technology and communicated to the public.