

# Opinion: Do not sell Taunton as a guinea pig for waste disposal

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We are in dire need of new methods to dispose of our sewage. Aries Clean Technologies proposes a lucrative idea: gasify the solid waste biomasses; harvest the solids for concrete, some of the gasses for power; then send the wastewater through the sewer.

Unfortunately, such a plan comes with a host of uncertainties, some that even stump the Environmental Protection Agency. The current arguments in support of their proposal focus largely on financial incentives the City of Taunton will benefit from, overlooking the massive gamble we would be taking on public health and environmental harm. We cannot welcome this plant.

There is a lack of understanding surrounding the toxins that will be released, notably polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). The EPA currently recognizes the wide use and distribution of these chemicals within our environment, including our drinking water, food, and various household products. This provides vague insight into how people are exposed to PFAS, like drinking contaminated water and breathing contaminated air.

The EPA notes some health effects from exposure to PFAS: decreased fertility, developmental effects in children, increased risk of cancers, immunosuppression, and hormone interference. That is the current understanding from the largest environmental governing body in the country as of October 2021. They are still researching key characteristics of PFAS that are relevant to Aries' project.

Methods of finding and measuring PFAS levels in our environment, determining how harmful PFAS are to humans and other animals, finding new exposure areas, and learning the best methods to manage and dispose of the chemical are all very big questions the agency has yet to work out. Even in partnering with other institutions to further research, we are far away from understanding this harmful toxin in-depth. Local officials should not be considering this solution with how little information there is on just one aspect of Aries'

execution. People are concerned with the city potentially looking past some of the health concerns and not taking an honest look at the proposal.



Aries provides promises and assurances, even staking their employees' professional reputation on how safe this system will be. Unfortunately, no one can see the full picture at this time. John Durant, a civil and environmental engineer, notes that we are already being exposed to PFAS in many different areas. Taunton does not need more exposure to this mystery toxin. We especially do not need it in the air while a pandemic is still affecting us, as PFAS places our elderly and immunocompromised at increased risk for severe COVID-19 symptoms. I would like to end by responding to a question posed by Durant: "How do you act? What actions do you take in the face of uncertainty, when you cannot sit on your hands and do nothing?"

You act in concern for the health and safety of your citizens. Money can come from other sources that do not position our city as a testing ground. Oppose the gasification plant, at least until we understand the real risks and know how to handle the toxins properly.

*Dom Ferreira*

*Taunton*