



For Immediate Release

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**"Oakland is Not a Toxic Dumping Ground"
Planning Commission (3-2) Denies Crematorium Appeal**

OAKLAND, CA –Last night, the City of Oakland Planning Commission made a final decision to uphold the recommendation of its staff members and deny the appeal of a crematorium seeking to operate in East Oakland without first obtaining a Conditional Use Permit. The Commission voted 3-2 to deny the crematorium’s appeal. Communities for a Better Environment staff and members, along with several East Oakland residents and business owners, were present to provide public comment in opposition to the crematorium.

In May, Councilmember Larry Reid sponsored an emergency ordinance, which the Oakland City Council unanimously adopted, stating that no crematorium may get a permit under the category “general manufacturing.” The emergency ordinance instead requires crematoriums to apply for and receive a Conditional Use Permit, which would better inform the community of potential negative impacts and put conditions in place to protect against those impacts. The Neptune Society appealed the City’s decision, claiming that the emergency ordinance did not apply to its proposed crematorium in East Oakland.

Communities for a Better Environment gathered hundreds of signatures from people who live and breathe in East Oakland, letters of support from key community groups and local businesses, all agreeing that any new crematorium in East Oakland should have to go through a public process that considers effects it may have on health, the environment, and the local economy as a whole. “We’re in the midst of more toxic pollution here because we’re a disenfranchised community. Our families’ health is not being taken seriously and we don’t want the dead to kill the living”, said Maxine Oliver-Benson, a community advocate with Communities for a Better Environment. “There are seven women that have contracted cancer since I have been in East Oakland for fourteen years and out of the seven, five have died.”

Human cremation is linked to a number of toxic air pollutants such as mercury and dioxin emissions. These pollutants are harmful to human health and exacerbate conditions like asthma and have been linked to cancer. Alameda County Public Health Department states that East Oakland already faces a disproportionate burden from illness associated with air pollution and the rate of asthma hospitalization visits in East Oakland is over two times higher than the Alameda County rate and one of the highest in the county. Among children under five years of age, the hospitalization rate is more than two times the County rate. The residents and local businesses deserve more accurate information concerning the size of operation and impact of this facility.

East Oakland is in the midst of a transformation. Residents are striving to realize their vision of a healthier, vibrant community. Last night’s success validates the importance of the Emergency Ordinance and overall public participation in decision making processes. The City and the community will receive critical information about crematorium facilities, including the effects they may have on the environment, air quality, public health, and the local economy.

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