Resolution No.: 20-1256
Introduced: October 27, 2026
Adopted: November 10, 2026

COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

Lead Sponsor: Natali Fani-González, Council President

SUBJECT: Council Position Regarding the Long-Term Disposal of Solid Waste

Background

1. In April 2018 County Executive Leggett announced his intention to create a "Zero Waste Task Force." In June of 2018, the County's Aiming for Zero Waste Task Force with staff support from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and consultant support from HDR, Inc., began its work to provide advice and guidance on how best to maximize waste reduction, reuse, recycling and sustainable management of all materials across the entire integrated waste management system.

2. The Task Force's work also included studying what to do with "what's left;" (after maximizing reduction, reuse, and recycling strategies) including reviewing the condition of the County's Resource Recovery Facility in Dickerson and noting the capital work needed to continue operations at the Resource Recovery Facility for the long-term versus other potential disposal options such as the long-haul of waste to landfills.

3. Upon beginning his first term as County Executive in December 2018, County Executive Elrich announced his support for closing the Resource Recovery Facility.

4. In May 2020, the Aiming for Zero Waste Task Force transmitted its recommendations to the County Executive and the County Council. The recommendations noted that significant additional analysis and operational changes were needed if the County were to seek to close the Resource Recovery Facility.

5. In October 2021, the Council adopted the 2020-2029 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan (later approved by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE)) which included language that the County Executive would provide to the County Council an analysis which compares the short and long-term costs, environmental and public health impacts, racial equity and social justice implications, facility impacts, operational concerns and other major issues of keeping the Resource Recovery Facility open versus transitioning to in-County or out-of-County landfilling. Similar language was

included in the County's 2025-2034 Plan adopted by the Council in April 2025 and later approved by MDE.

6. The Resource Recovery Facility (RRF) began operation in August 1995. The original contract (between the Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority (NMWDA) (which owns the RRF on behalf of Montgomery County) and Reworld (formerly Covanta) (which operates the facility) had an end date of April 2016 but was extended twice by five-years (at the County's initiative as allowed for under the contract), pushing the contract end date to April 2026.

7. In April 2025, the County Executive supported an emergency procurement between NMWDA and Reworld to extend the operating contract end date to April 2031, which took effect in April 2025. As with the original contract, the extended contract includes a "termination for convenience" clause which allows the County to opt out of the contract early with six months' notice; subject to a termination settlement amount under the contract.

8. The contract also includes a package of short-term capital work (paid for by the County) for the RRF (estimated at $64.5 million spread over several fiscal years) to ensure the safe and reliable operation of the facility through the end of the contract period (April 2031).

9. In June 2025, the Council received a DEP-sponsored consultant report (Municipal Solid Waste Management System, Alternatives Analysis, May 2025 (by Arcadis)) detailing the costs and other impacts of a type of Advance Waste Processing called Materials Recovery and Biological Treatment (MRBT) coupled with long haul of waste out of the county, stand alone long haul and the continued long-term use of the RRF.

10. In September 2025, DEP issued a request for procurement (RFP) for the long-haul of County solid waste by truck for disposal at out-of-County landfills.

11. In March 2026, as part of his Recommended FY27 DEP-Recycling and Resource Management (RRM) Budget, the Executive recommended closing the County's Resource Recovery Facility by January 1, 2027, and transitioning to long-haul of waste by truck to out of-county landfills. The Council President recommended the Council assume "current operations" (i.e. keeping the Resource Recovery Facility open during FY27) for the FY27 DEP RRM Budget, pending a comprehensive Council review of the issue after budget. The Council ultimately voted in support of the Council President's recommendation.

12. In August 2026, DEP issued a Request for Procurement (RFP) for the implementation of an Advanced Waste Processing (AWP) program to sort solid waste received at the Transfer Station with a goal of diverting a substantial amount of this waste from the disposal process.

13. The Council has most recently held meetings to discuss long-term solid waste disposal alternatives on July 28, September 15, September 29 and October 27, 2026.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following resolution:

The County Council supports keeping the Resource Recovery Facility open for the long term as the County's primary method for the disposal of solid waste.

The County Council requests that the County Executive initiate a facility planning effort to develop a scope of work for the needed capital upgrades of the Resource Recovery Facility that will ensure the facility can function reliably and in conformance with its permit requirements while also considering the feasibility to implement the latest state-of-the-art technologies to reduce emissions. The County Executive should develop a capital project for consideration as an amendment to the FY27-32 Capital Improvements Program.

The County Council also requests that the County Executive develop a Request for Proposals for the long-term operation of the Resource Recovery Facility to take effect no later than April 2031 (the current contract end date).

The County Council supports efforts to further remove recyclable metals from the ash residue generated at the Resource Recovery Facility and requests that the County Executive issue a Request for Proposals for the disposal or beneficial reuse of the ash residue which emphasizes the County's commitment to the goals of minimizing the environmental impact of ash disposal and advancing racial equity and social justice objectives.

The County Council requests that upon completion of the Request for Proposals process for an Advanced Waste Processing (AWP) facility, the County Executive transmit to the County Council a recommendation on whether to incorporate AWP into the County's waste management system.

The County Council reiterates its support for the New Organics Processing Facility project in the Approved FY27-32 Capital Improvements Program to build an in-county facility to accept organic waste with the preferred site being the County's existing Yard Trim Compost Facility.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

Sara R. Tenenbaum
Clerk of the Council