



For Immediate Release

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Cohoes Adopts Moratorium on Incineration of AFFF Containing PFAS Chemicals

Cohoes, NY (April 28, 2020) –Cohoes will impose a one year moratorium on the incineration of aqueous film-forming foam containing perfluorocarbon (PFAS) chemicals within the City limits, following a unanimous Common Council vote tonight on Mayor Bill Keeler’s initiative.

“I applaud the members of the Common Council for taking this essential step to protect our community. Our utmost concern must be for the immediate and long-term health and safety of the people of Cohoes and the surrounding area potentially affected by the incineration of AFFF containing these PFAS chemicals,” Mayor Keeler said following tonight’s vote, that came after more than 250 Cohoes residents and others from the surrounding area sent letters of support for the initiative.

The Cohoes moratorium on the incineration of AFFF also had the support of NYS Senator Neil Breslin and NYS Assemblymember John McDonald; County Legislators Gil Ethier, Bill Ricard, and Sean Ward; Mayors Patrick Madden of Troy and Charles Patricelli of Watervliet and Ellen McNulty-Ryan of Green Island; and Chairman of the Board of the Cohoes Housing Authority Mark Pascale.

“Given what we know about the hazards of PFAS chemicals, and the lack of solid science on the impact of burning firefighting foam AFFF containing these so-called “forever chemicals,” it makes no sense to allow these hazardous materials to be incinerated in our community until the science is settled, particularly given that 70 families are living in public housing in the shadows of the Norlite facility.” Mayor Keeler said in urging members of the Common Council to adopt the Local Law No. 4.

The newly adopted law places a moratorium on the incineration of AFFF containing PFAS chemicals for up to one year (beginning in May) unless it is determined by the Common Council, after receipt of recommendations from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and other interested entities, that AFFF containing PFAS chemicals can be safely and effectively destroyed through incineration and that incineration of AFFF containing PFAS chemicals does not have a detrimental impact on the safety, health, and wellbeing of the residents of the City of Cohoes.

In early February, Mayor Keeler became aware that the U.S. Department of Defense contracted with Norlite's parent company Tradebe to incinerate AFFF firefighting foam. In a February 25th meeting with company officials, state and local officials learned that the incineration occurred in 2018 and 2019. Senator Neil Breslin and Assemblymember John McDonald proposed a state-wide prohibition against the incineration of firefighting foam containing PFAS chemicals, but the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed consideration of that legislation.

"Given Governor Andrew Cuomo's leadership on environmental safety and environmental justice issues, I am confident that the State will eventually adopt the McDonald/Breslin bill. However, in the interim, it is incumbent on us to act to prevent the resumption of the incineration of PFAS chemicals in Cohoes until the science is clear that it would be safe to do so," Mayor Keeler said. The Norlite plant is undergoing reconstruction, and therefore currently not incinerating hazardous waste materials. Though company officials have said they are not incinerating materials containing PFAS chemicals now, they had indicated they may resume incineration of AFFF as early as May or June, 2020.

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