

Newport News residents ask city to consider barriers for coal dust

January 25 2024, by Josh Janney, The Virginian-Pilot



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Southeast Community residents have long complained about coal dust pollution from passing trains, and they want the City Council to intervene.

Several residents spoke at a City Council meeting to complain about [coal](#) dust from the Dominion Terminal Associates and Kinder Morgan coal terminals they say blows into the surrounding community and coats homes, cars, schools and playgrounds.

Some residents said the terminals need a wind fence or a coal dome. The dome would enclose the coal in the area, and the fences would block the dust from blowing into surrounding neighborhoods.

Pray First Mission Ministries Pastor Lathaniel Kirts, whose church is in the Southeast Community, told the Daily Press he believes the [city](#) should pass an ordinance to enforce more coal dust regulations, saying the city could consider the coal dust a "nuisance" that needs to be addressed for the benefit of Southeast Community residents.

"This is getting into the lungs of our children, it's getting to the lungs of our elderly," Kirts said. "And this is going to affect the respiratory abilities of our citizens and also the asthma rates within our community."

Southeast Community resident Yugonda Sample-Jones noted that several promising redevelopment projects are expected to be coming to southern Newport News—such as new homes stemming from the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative and a new seafood market. She said the presence of coal dust settling on these projects is "a cause for concern."

Sample-Jones urged the council to "prioritize the well-being of our residents" and encourage Dominion Terminal Associates to explore and implement effective measures such as wind fences or domes to mitigate the spread of the coal [dust](#).

In response to the concerns raised, Mayor Phillip Jones said the [federal government](#) recently made \$2 billion available for community grants that address environmental justice issues. He hopes the city can apply for

funding to address such concerns. He said the city has meetings scheduled with the Environmental Protection Agency to see how it can best access that money.

"I would imagine that some part of that money is going to be toward monitoring, some could be toward cleanup—it's a lot of money," Jones said. "We have already been working on this. It's a multiyear sort of issue. But right now, the thing that we can do with a private company is to make sure that we can access federal dollars."

Kirts acknowledged that air sensors and monitors set up as part of a Department of Environmental Quality study are "good beginnings" for examining the issue, but feels the city government needs to do more. He said this is a "common humanity" matter.

Newport News [resident](#) Patrick Wright also spoke Tuesday. He described the concept of "clean coal" as being "a myth" and "a fantasy" and said coal "spews a blanket of pollution and environmental degradation." He said Southeast Community residents worry about the health effects on themselves, their children and the elderly.

"Positive action to protect the health of our citizens and the environment needs to be taken today," Wright said. "Although coal played a large part in promoting the prosperity of the early days of our city, its liabilities demand that it be replaced with clean, carbon-free energy sources. King Coal must be reined in and ultimately disposed."

Ann Creasy, a field director with the Sierra Club, showed up "in solidarity" with Newport News residents and urged the council to support the club's petition to the Environmental Protection Agency to enact stricter regulations regarding coal pollution from open-top trains.

2024 The Virginian-Pilot. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Newport New residents ask city to consider barriers for coal dust (2024, January 25)
retrieved 30 April 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2024-01-newport-residents-city-barriers-coal.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.