



**Statement of
Kevin M. Stewart
Director of Environmental Health
American Lung Association in New Jersey**

**Before the
Council of the City of Linden
Regarding its Resolution
Concerning the Redevelopment Plan
for the DuPont Property
as it Relates to the
Proposed Power Plant and Other Facilities
of PurGen One, LLC**

**Council Chambers
City Hall
301 North Wood Avenue
Linden, New Jersey**

October 20, 2009

Good evening. I thank the Council for the opportunity to present comments on the resolution. I am Kevin Stewart and I serve as director of environmental health for the American Lung Association in New Jersey. We advocate for and represent not only well in excess of 50,000 people, here in Union County, who suffer from chronic lung disease, but also millions of others who desire to breathe clean air and so protect their good health.

The American Lung Association was founded over a century ago to fight tuberculosis. We are now dedicated to our broader mission of improving lung health and preventing lung disease. We have been fighting for relief from air pollution since the middle of the last century.

Based on very preliminary information reviewed by us, the American Lung Association in New Jersey respectfully requests that the Council of the City of Linden preserve the rights of Linden citizens and their City's government to consider fully the potential for impacts on public

health of any facility proposed for operation within the City before decisions are made to enable that facility's construction.

To be clear from the outset, we already know that the vast majority of New Jersey's population lives in areas where the existing air quality is unhealthful, violating one or the other or all of the United States Environmental Protection Agency's National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ground level ozone and fine particle pollution,. Yet even among these counties, Union County ranks worst in the state for daily and long-term levels of fine particle pollution, according to the American Lung Association's *State of the Air: 2009* report. In fact, for short-term (daily) fine particle pollution levels, Union County ranked 19th worst in the country (out of 584 counties), and was the worst-ranked county in the four-state New York – Newark – Bridgeport combined metropolitan area.

Furthermore, the American Lung Association is on record as stating that the air quality standards for both of these pollutants are still too weak to protect public health with an adequate margin of safety, so the urgency is that much greater.

In order for the Council to have some sense of the scope of the problem, it is important for you to consider that the populations of Union Countians at special risk from these pollutants include the following:

- 130,000 under the age of 18
- 65,000 age 65 and above
- Nearly 12,000 children with asthma
- Over 32,000 adults with asthma
- 13,000 persons with chronic bronchitis
- 7,000 persons with emphysema
- 145,000 persons with heart disease
- 31,000 persons with diabetes.

Of all of the above, we estimate that about 20,000 Linden citizens – on the order of half the City's population, fall into one or more of these populations at risk.

The American Lung Association in New Jersey sincerely regrets that not enough hard information is yet available on PurGen One, LLC's proposed combined power plant and chemical manufacturing facility for the Association to comment knowledgeably on it. There are so many unknowns about what is now merely a conceptual plan, ranging from types and quantities of emissions, to the expected exposures of populations locally and downwind, to the adverse health consequences that may result, that the Lung Association must ask for adequate information even to begin to offer meaningful comment.

The Council should know that historically, the American Lung Association has not supported new coal-fired power plants. Given that we know and appreciate the magnitude of the air pollution and asthma problems in New Jersey, especially in Union County, we find it important to gather all the data on the proposed facility so that everyone, especially the affected community, can understand what the expected plant emissions and potential for adverse health consequences may be, and so that that information can inform next steps.

It is our principled position that people have an essential right to know what air pollutants they might be exposed to, and what current medical science indicates the expected health effects could be, *before* decisions are made to make huge investments to build or change facilities to produce those emissions, and *before* decisions are made to enable such facilities' construction. Therefore, the American Lung Association of New Jersey recommends that the City of Linden not shut the door on that process of review and decision-making, but rather keep a system open for receiving properly informed public comment prior to making conclusive choices.

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Four hundred years ago, last month, the area Linden now occupies was first visited by Europeans when Henry Hudson's *Half Moon* sailed here. According to the City's website, one of the men on board reported that "the Lands were pleasant with Grasse and Flowers and goodly Trees... and very sweet Smells came from them." May the nearly forgotten history of a bygone day inspire all of us to find ways to re-create a pleasant and healthful environment for this City, now and into the future.

