

## PETITION TO CHAPEL HILL TOWN COUNCIL

Submitted by Citizens for a Coal-Free Community

March 8, 2010

WHEREAS, medical research has yielded compelling evidence that toxic chemicals, including mercury, arsenic, lead and particulate matter, emitted by coal-fired plants can adversely affect human health:

- 1) by increasing the rate of hospitalization of children with respiratory disease by up to 300% (*American Journal of Public Health*, 79: 623, 1989); and
- 2) by causing an increase in the risk of death by heart attacks and strokes of up to 12 times, particularly in women of an age to be mothers and grandmothers (*New England Journal of Medicine*, 356:447, 2007); and
- 3) by causing conditions that can result in infertility, premature birth and miscarriage (*Human Reproduction*, 20:2776, 2005); and
- 4) by causing mental deficits and learning disabilities in children exposed to mercury *in utero* (*Environment*, 44:25, 2002); and

WHEREAS, through their coal-burning co-generation plant on Cameron Avenue, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is polluting the air and threatening the health of its neighbors and the wider community; and

WHEREAS, the UNC cogeneration plant is responsible for more than 320,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions every year, and thus is a major contributor to global warming; and

WHEREAS, coal mining is socially and environmentally destructive, and UNC's coal may be extracted using mountain top removal, a method that causes egregious damage to the environment and communities of Appalachia; and

WHEREAS, the UNC-CH cogeneration plant boilers can burn at least a 50%-50% mixture of natural gas and a solid fuel, such as coal or solid biofuel; and

WHEREAS, the energy cost savings from burning coal are actually shifted to increased public health and environmental costs;

THEREFORE, the Citizens for a Coal-Free Community hereby petitions the Chapel Hill Sustainability Committee and the Chapel Hill Town Council in the interest of public health to endorse and join the request by citizens of Chapel Hill that the Chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the UNC Energy Task Force make a commitment to immediately reduce coal use and completely eliminate the use of coal as soon as possible, by 2015 at the latest, to be replaced by energy conservation, energy efficiency, and clean renewable

energy sources in order to protect the community from diseases related to burning coal and in order to dramatically reduce UNC-Chapel Hill's cogeneration plant's contribution to global warming and larger social and environmental problems of coal mining.

Respectfully submitted,

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\*References:

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