URGING THE CITY ADMINISTRATION TO INVESTIGATE ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE BENEFICIAL REUSE OF SEWAGE SLUDGE OTHER THAN THE REUSE TECHNOLOGY CURRENTLY BEING USED AT THE SAND ISLAND WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT.

WHEREAS, the City is currently reusing sewage sludge at its Sand Island wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) by using an in-vessel bioconversion facility, ("bioconversion facility") operated by Synagro to convert the sludge, also known as biosolids, to fertilizer pellets; and

WHEREAS, the beneficial reuse of sludge at the Sand Island WWTP was required as part of a 1995 consent decree and therefore, funding for the bioconversion facility was approved by the City Council in 2004 despite opposition from neighborhood boards, business groups and the affected community; and

WHEREAS, concerns about the bioconversion facility include the following:

1. Public health and safety. Research by David Lewis, a microbiologist, found that the treatment process used in the beneficial reuse of sludge does not kill all pathogens in the sludge. Because the fertilizer pellets produced at the Synagro bioconversion facility are being used at City parks, playgrounds and golf courses, there is a concern about the public's health and safety due to pathogen re-growth. In a 2009 study, a nationwide survey of sewage treatment plants found that the sludge produced at those plants contained a wide variety of toxic metals, pharmaceuticals, flame retardants and other compounds, including some antibiotics in surprisingly high concentrations, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is continuing to assess the health risks posed by these chemicals.

2. Impacts to businesses and residents. On Sand Island, there are 110 lessees on State land who borrowed money to establish and grow their businesses and to build infrastructure serving their leased land who have been severely affected by the bioconversion facility. Further, in 2003, a consultant to Synagro determined that there was sufficient land at the Sand Island WWTP to build additional bioconversion facilities on Sand Island that could handle not only sludge from that plant but from other City wastewater treatment plants. Therefore, the construction of additional bioconversion facilities could mean that trucks carrying sludge will pass by residences and businesses before arriving at the Sand Island WWTP.
RESOLUTION

(3) Visual blight and impacts to tourism. The current bioconversion facility is about 116 feet tall, almost double the allowed 60-foot height limit in the Sand Island area. The massive structures in the complex that make up the facility can be seen not only by Kalihi residents and downtown businesses but also by tourists who arrive and depart at Honolulu International Airport. Addition of a second bioconversion facility, and the administration’s plan to build even more bioconversion facilities at the Sand Island WWTP, will add to this visual blight and may negatively affect the state’s number one industry.

(4) Marketability of fertilizer pellets. The City entered into a contract with Synagro to operate the bioconversion facility and market the fertilizer pellets produced at that facility. Under the contract, Synagro would produce 6,000 tons of fertilizer pellets per year, of which 2,000 tons would be for the City for use at its parks and golf courses, and the remaining 4,000 tons would be marketed by Synagro. In a 2009 annual report by Synagro on the beneficial reuse of the sludge, it was reported that only 3,415.54 dry tons of pellets were produced, of which only 1,292.28 dry tons were marketed. When factoring in labor and transportation costs, the marketing of the pellets resulted in a net loss of $63,447.82 in Fiscal Year 2009. In calendar year 2010, the total revenue generated from the sale of the fertilizer pellets was only $438, and when the cost of labor and transportation was considered, the marketing of the pellets resulted in a net loss of $124,343.

(5) Reputation and credibility. Serious issues have been raised regarding the reputation and credibility of the current operator of the bioconversion facility.

(6) The cost to construct the existing bioconversion facility was over $40 million, including cost overruns exceeding $7 million, and the projected cost of the second facility was budgeted at $26 million;

and

WHEREAS, based on the above-enumerated concerns, the Council deleted $26 million in funding from the fiscal year 2012 executive capital budget for a second bioconversion facility at the Sand Island WWTP; and
WHEREAS, despite the concerns regarding the treatment of sludge using the bioconversion facility, the Council recognizes the need to treat wastewater sludge so that it can be beneficially reused rather than being disposed of at the City’s landfill; and

WHEREAS, there are a number of reputable companies employing alternative technologies in Europe, Asia and North America that appear to pose fewer risks to public health and safety than the Synagro technology for the beneficial reuse of sewage sludge; and

WHEREAS, uses of sewage sludge byproducts for purposes other than fertilizer should be explored, including use as fuel; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City and County of Honolulu that the City administration is urged to investigate alternative technologies for the beneficial reuse of sewage sludge other than the technology used at the Sand Island WWTP’s bioconversion facility that will be sustainable and less harmful to the environment, including technologies successfully used in Europe, Asia and North America by companies with good reputations for credibility; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City administration is requested to report back to the Council within 90 days of the adoption of this Resolution regarding its investigation of alternative technologies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City administration is requested to provide the Council with copies of any documents or other forms of information the administration has obtained regarding alternative technologies for the beneficial reuse of sewage sludge; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that it is the intent of the Council to work with the City administration expeditiously to implement a safe and healthful alternative to the Synagro technology so as to ensure that any necessary construction may commence as soon as possible; and
BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Mayor, the Managing Director, the Director of the Department of Environmental Services, and the Sand Island Business Association.

DATE OF INTRODUCTION:

JUN 28 2011

Honolulu, Hawaii

Councilmembers
RESOLUTION 11-182

Introduced: 06/28/11 By: ROMY CACHOLA Committee: COUNCIL

Title: RESOLUTION URGING THE CITY ADMINISTRATION TO INVESTIGATE ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE BENEFICIAL REUSE OF SEWAGE SLUDGE OTHER THAN THE REUSE TECHNOLOGY CURRENTLY BEING USED AT THE SAND ISLAND WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT.

Voting Legend: Y = Aye, Y* = Aye w/Reservations, N = No, A = Absent, ABN = Abstain

CC-185 CHANG – REFERRAL OF RESOLUTION 11-182 TO COUNCIL FLOOR.

COUNCIL 07/06/11 RESOLUTION 11-182 WAS ADOPTED.

ANDERSON Y BERG Y CACHOLA Y CHANG Y GABBARD Y
GARCIA Y HARIMOTO Y KOBAYASHI Y MARTIN Y

I hereby certify that the above is a true record of action by the Council of the City and County of Honolulu on this RESOLUTION.

BERNICE K. N. MAU, CITY CLERK

ERNEST Y. MARTIN, CHAIR AND PRESIDING OFFICER