

# Citizens Against Covance

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Majority of Chandler Residents Still Opposed To Covance**

CHANDLER – Citizens Against Covance (CAC), a Chandler-based grass roots organization, announced Tuesday the updated results of their study of Covance-related emails sent to the City of Chandler. Since this time last year, Chandler’s Mayor and City Council have received almost a thousand citizen emails regarding the Covance issue, the majority coming from Arizona residents. Only a few dozen of these have been in support of the company building its proposed testing facility at the Chandler Airpark. Through a standing Public Records request, CAC analyzed every feedback letter emailed to the city regarding Covance, the first one dating all the way back to August 9, 2005. Even after weeding out the hundreds of out-of-state emails, the study shows that 87.1% of Chandler residents who weighed in on the issue are opposed to Covance.

Citizens Against Covance first calculated Covance’s “approval rating” in November of 2006 using a similar study, showing that 86.1% of Chandler residents who emailed the city were against Covance. “It’s ironic,” laughs CAC member Mike Boerman. “Since November they’ve had all these neighborhood meetings and outreach attempts, and *still* Covance’s acceptance level by the community has not changed ....in fact, it’s gotten even worse!”

The controversial contract lab Covance has been subject to intense opposition since the announcement of its plan to build a new facility in Chandler, near Gilbert Road & Queen Creek Road. Most frustrating to residents is the company’s refusal to disclose how it will dispose of the 250,000 animal carcasses per year it’s estimated to test on. Many neighbors have expressed fears over health and safety, as well as environmental concerns. “I don’t want to live next to the only medical waste incinerator in Chandler,” complains Eleanor Weedon, who lives just ¼ mile from Covance’s proposed location, “and I don’t want to live next to trucks carting away dead animals to an offsite incinerator either. What will this do to the property values?”

The controversy heated up last year with the surprise announcement of Covance’s relocation to a 50-acre site at the Chandler Airpark, essentially circumventing not only the Planning & Zoning procedure and Council action, but skirting Chandler residents’ voices and their participation in the decision-making process.

In August 2006, Covance’s new site at the Chandler Airpark was rezoned by its then owner First Industrial Realty Services, without the public being informed of Covance’s intentions to build there. Since then, City Council members and staff have given vague and conflicting accounts on whether or not they were aware of Covance’s interest in the parcel when they voted unanimously to rezone the property. “I think Chandler residents definitely should’ve been told about this ahead of time,” observes Apache Junction Councilman Richard Dietz, whose own City Council actually rescinded its rezoning decision on a property in late 2006, after reconsidering all the attributes of the project. “The way the Covance rezoning was handled took all the decision-making power away from the people, where it belongs, and put it into the hands of politicians and big business.”

For now, Boerman and other members of CAC are researching the rezoning for Covance’s new site, who at the city knew about it, and why the public was not informed. As for why Covance is moving ahead with their building plans? “I just don’t understand it,” wonders Boerman. “The overwhelming majority of Chandler residents are against Covance. Why would any company want to locate in a city where they are so clearly unwelcome?”

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