

**Orange County
Commission for the Environment**

DRAFT Meeting Summary

April 8, 2013

Southern Human Services Center, Chapel Hill

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Neal (Chair), Jan Sassaman (Vice Chair), Lucy Adams, May Becker, Terri Buckner, Peter Cada, Loren Hintz, Bill Kaiser, Tom O'Dwyer, Gary Saunders, David Welch

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sam Yellen

STAFF: Rich Shaw, Tom Davis

GUESTS: Gayle Wilson, Cody Marshall, Kellem Agnew Emanuele, Jeanette O'Connor

- I. **Call to Order** – Neal called the meeting to order at 7:32 pm.
- II. **Additions or Changes to Agenda** – None
- III. **Approval of Minutes** – Sassaman motioned to approve the March 11 meeting summary as written; seconded by Kaiser. Motion approved unanimously.
- IV. **Food Waste Collection and Composting** – Gayle Wilson (Director, Orange Co. Solid Waste Management) thanked the CFE for the invitation to discuss this matter and introduced Cody Marshall (OC Recycling Programs Manager).

Marshall provided an overview of County's food waste collection and recycling program. He described his department's efforts to collect food waste and other compostable organic material from local restaurants, grocery stores, and food service establishments for composting. Marshall said the program has helped divert nearly 2,000 tons from landfill disposal each year.

Marshall described the process of gathering food waste and other organics from about 30 locations using a private contractor (Brooks, Goldston, NC). He said the suppliers need to average more than 4,000 lbs. per visit to make it worthwhile for collection.

Marshall described two new efforts to increase the recycling of food waste and organics in Orange County. The first is the upcoming re-opening of the solid waste convenience center in northern Orange County (Walnut Grove Church Rd.). The state-of-the-art facility will include an area to accept residential food waste—the first in North Carolina. The second new effort is an ongoing pilot project to collect food waste at three schools in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro district. The success of this program will require more support (or "buy in") from the students and faculty for a reduced level of waste contamination.

Marshall and Wilson answered questions from CFE members about the cost of the program, the source of funding, contractor selection, selling compost to county residents, the potential inclusion of UNC campus/hospital [*they operate own separate program*], methane recovery by Brooks Contracting [*not at this time*], the potential future installation of an aerobic digester for converting waste to energy.

Becker asked about the potential for expanding the program, such as reducing the individual volume requirements, residential pick up, and accepting farm organics. Marshall discussed the difficulties with residential pick up, exemplified by the fact that there are less than five programs that have attempted this in the US and Canada. He said the County's organic area at new solid waste convenience center will be a good initial effort to test this approach. Marshall said the County picks up organic materials from two breweries, and some of that goes to an area farm.

Neal thanked Wilson and Marshall and asked if there is anything the CFE could do to support this program. Wilson said the recycling of organic food waste is just one part of the current integrated system and it will continue to work only if there remains to be economies of scale throughout the system to fund the different program components.

- V. **Orange County Curbside Recycling Program** – Neal reviewed the discussion from the March meeting about the County considering to eliminate its curbside recycling for residents in unincorporated sections of the county and the potential privatization of rural curbside collections through a franchise contract. He referenced background materials in the CFE meeting packet and handed out a resolution approved by the Solid Waste Advisory Board (SWAB). He asked Sassaman to provide an overview of the resolution.

Neal handed out a draft position statement that he prepared for CFE consideration. He provided an overview of the statement and answered questions from the members. CFE members discussed the proposed statement and whether there was urgency in submitting this information prior to tomorrow night's board of county commissioners meeting (April 9). Members discussed the idea of creating a single solid waste collection and disposal tax district, as was suggested in the SWAB resolution.

CFE members discussed interest in maintaining some form of the current integrated system for recycling waste from county and municipal residents. They asked Wilson how the County intends to fund the current recycling program. Wilson said the County plans to stop charging the 3R fee in July 2013 and use \$1.7 million from its solid waste landfill funds to fund the recycling program in 2013-14.

CFE members restructured the position statement and agreed to include a suggestion that the County and its partners consider the single solid waste tax district approach. The CFE agreed to have Neal to make the final edits and work with staff to submit the document as a CFE memo to the BOCC Clerk prior to the April 8 BOCC meeting. The CFE asked staff to provide copies to towns of Chapel Hill, Carrboro and Hillsborough.

- VI. **Committee Meetings** – The committees did not meet due to the late hour.
- VII. **Updates and Information Items** – There was no discussion of the update and information items provided earlier: a) CFE recruitment efforts, b) the Orange County legislative agenda package 2013, c) the potential repeal of the state solar tax credit, and d) the levels of NC conservation trust funds in the Governor McCrory budget.

Buckner reported that the OWASA staff is willing to provide CFE members with a tour of the OWASA Mitigation Tract to see the forest management activities on that site. Shaw said he would work with the OWASA staff to arrange the tour.

- VIII. **Adjournment** – Neal adjourned the meeting at 9:40 pm.