

Minutes – Regular Meeting
Solid Waste Advisory Board
December 7, 2006
Approved March 8, 2007

Attendance: Linda Bowerman, Al Vickers, Bonnie Norwood, Remus Smith, and Jan Sassaman

Staff: Gayle Wilson, Blair Pollock, Wanda McCain, and Paul Spire,

1. **Adoption of Minutes from November 2 SWAB meeting** Norwood moves to accept. Bowerman 2nd. Passes unanimously.
2. **Update on Solid Waste Management Planning Process** Pollock states that the first part of the study is finished and there are two things pending. The second task that we are involved with RRSI is that of gathering information about the true cost of collecting and transporting recyclable materials to local markets and designing and building a MRF. There is a collection of four RFP's being used to gather this information. The second task is the scope of work associated with the drop-off sites and the convenience centers, particularly in their recycling aspect. We have a system that works but could be improved. We are going to look at how the system might be improved and what other materials could be collected there. That will entail some scenario building by them (RRSI) and they will come back with a process where they will bring forward a set of options of what it might look like in the future compared to the existing system, do we have fewer bigger centers, do we maintain unstaffed drop-off sites?

Sassaman asks what the criteria will be to make the decisions, will they be purely economic.

Pollock states that that will be the other aspect of the study, where RRSI is proposing an exercise where they bring forward some criteria ranking for the work group to judge. It's kind of a problem where you weigh a bunch of options and say this is how much they each cost and then here are the other criteria, we are all affected by the cost data first, so that may affect our decision, but if we don't state how much each option costs on the front end, then that's your first question, "How much does each option cost?" So it's a balancing act between cost and other criteria.

Sassaman states that there are two costs -- the immediate, how much it will cost in the annual budget, and the deferred cost and deferred savings in all the options.

Pollock states that that will be part of the exercise. It won't be terribly straightforward because there are many ways to do things. We know that there are some things we could do that we are not doing now. We make good money from source separating. Literature shows that people recycle more at the drop-off sites than at home with the less separation they have to do. The less separation the less value for the material so the more value we have to add (by processing). At what

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point do we stop being diversion driven and factor in monetary value. That is the type of decisions that will come up.

The other piece of study work that is ongoing is more waste-related. At this point it is related to waste generated in the unincorporated area. The three surveys are just about done – solid waste convenience centers, private residential waste haulers, and business in the unincorporated areas and what they do with their waste. The data from those will be used as a basis to build a couple of models for other kinds of waste hauling, universal service or franchising. The current system is mixed.

Those two studies have to get finished and then there is the integration work.

Wilson states that it is taking longer than originally thought. It probably will be late spring before it comes together and we can talk about comprehensive integrated options.

Letteri asks how credible is the information provided by the consultants in terms of predicting behavior. In your experience is it reliable?

Pollock states that the level of professionalism was the basis on which we chose them. They are going to be as credible as they can. There is data from other areas that show fifty percent participation rates are typical in voluntary rural solid waste collection programs. Does fifty percent get us where we need to be in terms of economy of scale? Some of the modeling will be based on what goes on in other communities.

Wilson states that modifications will be made if needed just like some of the early data we've seen when some concern was raised that some numbers are too high or low. We've added a step to get actual bid numbers through RFPs. Some are fairly easy to firm up, like how much does it cost to haul a load of recyclables from here to Greensboro. We can get accurate numbers that are likely to be within five percent, that's like a bull's-eye. Other areas we'll just have to do our best.

Letteri asks if we can predict behavioral impacts on recycling, such as how much does curb sorting increase recycling?

Pollock replies that in some areas there is pretty good data like rural waste collection. In other areas like commercial recycling, collection it is much more wide open and challenging. There will be a lot of opportunities to look at it.

Sassaman asks what can be done between now and February to keep the elected officials and staff on the work group interested? Is there any value for a memo summarizing where we are?

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Wilson states that after the first of the year it would be wise to do a two page update, but a meeting would not be well attended.

Letteri states that what has been in the past is an information memo to put in front of Council. I would not be opposed to doing a main item and actually present something to Council and get a better feel of all the issues going on.

Wilson states that Carrboro prefers personal updates. We've been there twice.

Vickers states that after the holidays everyone should be updated.

Sassaman asks where have we left this concept of a general update memo?

Wilson states that we could prepare something for mid-January and decide if it should go to the workgroup first and then the boards.

Sassaman replies that it should just go to the work group, not very formal but just to keep them engaged.

Smith states that it needs to be a pointed thing – this is what we have to do and this is what you need to think about.

3. **2007 Solid Waste Legislative Issues** Wilson explains the handout he's provided on the solid waste legislation and that the following could have some fairly significant implications on waste management primarily disposal. In the short session earlier this year the State passed a landfill permit moratorium bill which states that no permits will be issued for landfills over the next year because there are some things that need to be studied which will be done during the moratorium. It then explains potential impacts of the moratorium, including that some politicians, particularly in the eastern part of the state, are interested in determining if there are things to do to prevent large amounts of out of state waste from coming in, notwithstanding the recent interpretations of the US Constitution Commerce Clause that says they can do nothing about the waste coming in. That stimulated these studies. The state staff convinced the elected officials not to say anything about out of state waste, but to instead make it look like it's an effort to first increase recycling. This did result in some genuine studies.

Owner and Operator Liability and Solvency – The issue is with environmental types of facilities. You don't want to have the owner to have limited liability like those some waste companies have set up. These are not as transparent as conventional corporations; you don't know who owns what and what is really behind them. All there is a desk and a phone. These limited liability companies are creatures of the

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parent corporation so they are removed from liability for these facilities. This is a real issue and they need to find a satisfactory answer.

Compliance with NC Bans on Disposal of Certain Waste Types – This also came about partially due to the out of state waste issue. Is it a way to get at the out of state waste and partly it's a legitimate issue. Waste from another state may not comply with North Carolina bans, but North Carolina has to figure out how to get compliance with the bans or exempt that waste and take only North Carolina waste. In addition when you shred waste it's more efficient to ship, but the waste loses its identity, you can't tell what it was. There are state bans that are related to waste reduction like those on pallets or aluminum cans and those pertaining to toxicity such as batteries or hazardous waste. The State doesn't go into most communities to enforce the bans we have now so if we're not enforcing them now why would you worry about them on the new waste. By enforcing the bans you're going to kick up a lot dust in communities that don't have recycling programs. If you're going to hold them to the standard of the bans it will cause a huge problem, they would have to start programs.

Alternative Analysis and Impact Study - this is again partly due to the out of state ban. The current permitting process does not require an impact study as part of the siting process. Some local governments do so. The state is going to discuss if they should require a comprehensive impact study to look at all the aspects of environmental impact that a landfill might have. Should every aspect be looked at including remote transportation impacts? Those of us in the business are concerned about this and if you keep piling this stuff on, it may become impossible to site a landfill. While some may say, 'That's a good thing' as a practical matter, you have to have a landfill. Even if you look at alternatives to a landfill, eventually you have to have a landfill. Recycling is not an alternative to a landfill but a way to reduce waste; they go together. What alternative is there? There are some areas where there should be a more comprehensive environmental impact statement where there are unique environments such as along the coast with its unique hydrology. We don't know how this will end up.

The other issue is local government franchising and host fees. If a local government grants a franchise, does the state or those around that county have a right to block it, they want to go back to change the franchise system to make it more difficult. Should someone from Orange County have a right to block a landfill in Camden County? They were offered host fees for a landfill there and it's a poor place. The State is saying 'We should eliminate host fees'. One option is if a local government gets host fees, they're a partner and liable for that landfill. It is going to be more difficult to site landfills, issue and award franchises, and North Carolina is already short of capacity. We're going to pay a lot more and ship it a lot further. Is that environmentally sound? Groundwater is not the only environmental issue, hauling hundreds of miles is a big environmental and safety issue.

Norwood asks about the cost for cleanup of old landfills?

Wilson replies that in Kentucky the average cost of cleaning up old landfills was typically between half million and a million dollars.

Vickers notes it can be difficult to contact the responsible parties for cleanups.

Sassaman adds that even the investigation and study can be very costly, as much as a million dollars and sometimes the actual cleanup cost can be minimal compared to the cost of study.

Wilson states that if there were a system in place to prioritize and rank the cleanups, that could be a good selling point for a landfill tip fee surcharge, but there is no such system.

4. Programs/Services Update

SW Operations Center Wilson states that it will probably go out to bid around mid January and awarded in March.

Transfer Station Planning Wilson states that this will be discussed at the Commissioners meeting on Tuesday, December 12. The decisions on the table are choose the site at the landfill, search for another site, or have a landfill neighborhood community meeting.

Letteri asks what is driving the search part of that.

Wilson replies that there is a reluctance by some Commissioners to continue to burden the community in the area of Eubanks Road and Rogers Road with additional continuing solid waste facility because they have hosted since 1972. The community thinks “Lets’ share this with other parts of County” which is not unreasonable. We looked at hauling directly to Durham and also to Alamance. To haul to Alamance we need a transfer station anyway. There is no way to get around having a transfer station. The landfill site is a location where we could shoe horn it in and it would function, aside from size, it is a very good site.

Vickers states that on Hwy 86 and Hwy 40 there is a large piece of undeveloped land right by the highway, would that be any more convenient for trucks. It would keep transfer trucks out of the neighborhood.

Wilson states that there are several location that would work for a transfer station in a reasonable proximity to Chapel Hill but some of them are not possible due to land use

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restrictions. At some point if it is not in close proximity to the landfill it will cost more to operate because there would be a need for a separate crew.

Norwood states that I have been trying to stress to the neighbors that this is going to happen. The only thing that is relevant is that they want the property. I've tried to explain that there would only be two more trucks an hour. It will be totally up to management how it looks and smells. It is not a landfill. They can't leave garbage sitting in the truck. Look at what solid waste management has done for the neighborhood – trucks don't run through there [the neighborhood], garbage is being picked up along the road all the time, if you complain about noise something is done, if you complain about hours they do something. They are doing it, we can't fight this battle.

Vickers mentions odor problem.

Wilson replies that there have been odor problems lately, we are aware of that and are trying to change our practices. Sometimes there are problems when it rains several days in a row. Sometimes it's the mulch smell when it's being turned.

Landfill Gas Study Wilson states that there have been some new things that have come up – a new law to possibly provide for some tax credits [to improve the economics of landfill gas]. A presentation will be made around the end of January to the Commissioners to conclude the preliminary analysis and give the Commissioners some decision points.

Highway 57 Convenience Center Site Identification Wilson states that the negotiation for the new site where it was going to be relocated has not been successful. We are back to square one.

Walnut Grove Convenience Center Temporary Expansion Wilson states that the Commissioners will be asked to approve the purchase of 18 acres next to the current site. If purchased we will proceed to redesign the site to possibly serve as a backup in the event the Hwy 57 site is closed.

Mixed Paper to Curbside Collection Programs Pollock states that the bins have been delivered to Hillsborough. Carrboro will be completed this week. Chapel Hill should be complete by the first of the year and then rural area will begin in January. The signal to start putting out mixed paper is when you get your blue bin.

Smith states that staff should be complimented on the newspaper articles. They were well written. After receiving the new bin I canvassed the neighborhood and out of 25 homes 18 were using the new bins.

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Other Wilson states that Rod Visser has officially retired as of today.

5. **Other** Norwood asks when we go to a transfer station, what will be the guidelines for things that may be a little questionable to throw away. Do we go to black trash bags or shred everything for security? We won't be in control of it once it leaves the transfer station.

Wilson states that even now people should protect themselves. Shred anything with personal information on it. There hasn't been much talk about a campaign like that. We don't have a plan for changing anything.

Norwood states that there is a new person at the Eubanks Convenience Center that has a bit of questionable attitude, but there is nothing that goes on in there that isn't supposed to – he is very good.

Smith moves to adjourn. Norwood 2nd.

Adjourn 9:00pm

Next meeting: January 4, 2007

Southern Human Services Center