

Minutes – Regular Meeting
Solid Waste Advisory Board
May 4, 2006
Approved June 1, 2006

Attendance: Bonnie Norwood, Jan Sassaman, Remus Smith, Al Vickers, and B J Tipton

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

1. **Adoption of Minutes from April 6 SWAB meeting** Smith moves to accept. Norwood 2nd. Passes unanimously.
2. **Principles/Values for Selection of MRF to Process Orange County Recyclables and for Selection of Landfill to Receive Orange County’s Transferred Waste** Deferred
3. **Solid Waste Operations Center – Sponsoring May 31 Neighborhood Meeting**
Wilson states that we want to try and have a meeting to inform them [the neighborhood] of the conceptual plan of the Operations Center and get feedback. By request of Barry Jacobs we have come up with one night that he would be able to attend – May 31. We are asking if the SWAB wants to sponsor the meeting where we would bring in the architects and give those that wanted time to ask questions. We anticipate the meeting to be about an hour and we’re talking about 7pm.

Sassaman asks where will it be.

Wilson replies Southern Human Services is reserved. We will contact the usual [landfill neighbors] group and the Northwood neighborhood.

Smith moves that the SWAB sponsor the meeting for the neighborhood in and around the proposed location of the Operations Center and empower staff to find a place and time.

Vickers 2nd.

Sassaman asks did you check to see if the church was available.

Wilson replies not this time. At a previous meeting someone mentioned that they didn’t attend because they felt uncomfortable.

Sassaman asks if there will be a general invitation.

Wilson states that we would prefer to get the people that live closest to it to have the best chance to be informed and asks questions.

Votes passes by affirmation.

4. **Fiscal 2006-07 Preliminary Budget** Wilson states that I was not able to meet with the manager before this meeting, therefore I don't have an idea of what he may change in my recommendation to him. There may be some concern about raising the recycling (3-R) fee. There are no changes in what I reported at the last meeting. We are recommending mixed paper be added to urban and rural curbside beginning October 1, expansion of HHW program to include small businesses, a heater for our electronics recycling building and small expansion in the food waste collection program. Some accounts were reduced 25% last year in all departments, for example uniforms and while we put in our actual needs statement in the budget, these cuts may recur. Our budget is separate from the general fund but they try to treat all departments the same although we aren't part of the general fund.

5. **Programs/Services Update**

Landfill Gas Wilson states that we are going to initiate a further study to examine two options for possible utilization of the landfill gas. One is to work with the University to determine if it is feasible [for use of the gas by the University] and if so what the economics would be of piping actual gas to Chapel Hill North. It's probably not worth it if they're not going to build anything there for six or seven years (as they will miss gas production peak). The other alternative is to consider providing energy for a cluster of government buildings on Eubanks Road, which would be the Animal Shelter, the Operations Center, possible transfer station and a school. In two to three months we'll have that report and know if it's a go or not. Economically an option with the University would make more sense and be less costly. They won't have to worry about generating electricity, putting it on the grid, negotiating with Duke Power; they would clean up the gas a little and pipe it directly to a UNC boiler.

Sassaman asks what will be required for the collection system.

Spire states that [it will require] the wells, piping it altogether to a main header and depending how much it will have to be cleaned up, compressed and used to run a micro turbine or if we can clean it up less and put it in a pipeline to the University.

Wilson notes the industry is moving towards micro turbines and away from internal combustion engines which are noisier and tend to produce more emissions.

Smith asks what does a "well" look like?

Spire replies that a well is a hole dug into the trash that a PVC pipe is stuck into to draw the gas into using a vacuum pump. The wells are 18 to 24 inches in diameter. You can put a lot in and put lateral pipes to connect to vertical headers.

Wilson notes its likely gas will be extracted only from the south side, not the north side.

Spire notes that Greensboro's landfill is already producing gas.

Norwood asks if there is anyway to gather information about the dangers of the installation?

Wilson states that it's dangerous with a small "d". It's not like it is going to blow up 20 or 30 acres. It's dangerous if you don't know what you are doing. It's possible that someone right next to the extraction point might be killed, but I don't think it's dangerous to the neighborhood.

Sassaman notes that this is not high-pressure pipeline gas. It is low-grade gas with moisture, CO₂, other contaminants.

Pollock notes that the gas company does not want this gas in their pipeline.

Transfer Station Wilson states that when the presentation was made to the BOCC regarding the SWAB recommendation for a transfer station - no decision was made. Staff was instructed to meet with the City of Durham for the potential of sharing the existing transfer station or Durham building a new transfer station in the southern part of Durham that we could partner on. Rod Visser, John Link and I met with Durham and they have no intention of building a new transfer station in the southern part of the county. Regarding the issue of using their existing transfer station, they have no problem with accepting Orange County's waste, however they are concerned that their transfer station is near capacity and may not have the room to handle it. They also wanted us to consider working with Durham to increase recycling rates from both communities to invest in a large high tech single stream MRF, thereby reducing their waste to free up more capacity at their waste transfer station.

Sassaman asks where is the Durham transfer station?

Wilson replies in north Durham on Club Boulevard, right off I-85.

Gayle talks about how this may go against the interlocal agreement because the Towns are to pledge their waste to the County and they County must provide management of that waste now I'm not sure if taking it to Durham qualifies. The Towns may object saying, "That doesn't work and it breaches the contract, so we're going to withdraw our pledge of waste." In previous analyses we've shown there is significant additional cost to haul waste (in garbage trucks) to their transfer station as opposed to Eubanks Road. The garbage trucks will spend more time on the road than collecting and it can be demonstrated straightforwardly that this is not a good idea.

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Vickers asks Gayle what was your reading on the need for a transfer station from the Towns.

Wilson states that intellectually they all realize we are not going to have a landfill and a transfer station is a necessary alternative. While they may disagree on the specific location, they also disagree about other items such as Pay As You Throw. The issue of a transfer station will be prolonged and the landfill space we were hoping to preserve is disappearing.

Vickers asks what is the absolute last date to make a decision on the transfer station?

Wilson states that it depends on if there will be a site search process within the county in which case it's already almost too late. If the decision is go/no go for Eubanks Road, there is about six to eight months of cushion to make that decision. Practically, by the first of the year they need to know what is going to happen for us to do the permitting.

Vickers asks what can the SWAB do to bring that before the local bodies of office?

Wilson states that you've made your recommendation and explained your rationale, other than contacting your elected officials, there isn't much else. There are very few options for siting a transfer station, but there is not that much concern about waiting even though the option of preserving landfill space for emergency purposes is evaporating.

Norwood states that I can see them putting off the decision until the last minute, trucking the garbage to Durham, and then revisiting the transfer station issue later.

Sassaman states that that will not work because the Towns will have to make an investment in the infrastructure that carries the garbage to Durham.

Spire states that Carrboro's trucks are not meant to go anywhere but in the streets of Carrboro. They will not go down the road at 60 mph. Chapel Hill's [trucks] were specified to pull the hills of Chapel Hill; they don't have a road gear in them. Their top speed might be 52 mph.

Wilson states that hopefully I will be able to do an analysis with just one jurisdiction as a model and the numbers will be so bad, that it won't go much further. The University would also be likely not to go to north Durham with their waste.

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Scavenging at Convenience Centers Wilson states that there was a letter in the paper by Flicka Bateman. She spoke with one of the commissioners who brought it up in a meeting. On my “to do” list is to bring back a more liberal [scavenging] policy.

Sassaman states that it will take someone getting hurt before they realize the danger.

Wilson states that with the staff, the commitment and standing we have in the community the insinuation that we would rather landfill something than reuse or recycle it is absurd on its face. Like with everything, there are certain balances you must make and accommodation for other reasons. We set the goal at 61% because it’s practical and reasonable. It’s not 100%.

Sassaman asks if the argument can be made that scavenging some products increases the amount of material that is landfilled i.e. electronics. [In that they are worthless after the chips, and other useful components are removed.]

Wilson states that with electronics the case would be instead of getting some preferential treatment regarding the cost to recycle, they would start charging more to handle it.

Sassaman asks if there is some way to make that argument rationally.

Wilson states that anyone who read the memo could see that it states as plainly as possible, all the arguments. Most of the convenience centers are physically deficient and can’t accommodate larger salvage situations. Two have no room at all for a salvage shed. Ideally we would expand the size of the salvage shed(s). Generally the salvage sheds are not used for computers. We advertise to take usable computers to the PTA Thrift shop. For the people that use our facility, one issue is confidentiality and security, very few people know how to clean their hard drive. If you allow scavenging we can’t guarantee that security.

Norwood states that every time we bring this up, we talk about computers. Most people I know don’t care about them. If that is an issue, can’t the computer be placed inside the fence where no one could get to it? Not in the convenience centers but at the landfill.

Wilson states that you could do that but for those that live in the extreme north part of the county will probably not take the time to drive to the landfill to recycle a computer.

Pollock states that we started out with just the site at the landfill and it was a popular demand with the commissioners to expand it to the convenience centers as well. We followed their lead and the public lead on that.

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Vickers states that we have beat this to death before and came to a recommendation. Apparently the recommendation was not acceptable to the commissioners and they want to do something different.

Wilson states that the Board has not been explicit about what they do want.

Vickers suggests adding a release form to reduce County's risk

Wilson notes that taking time to get people to read and sign this at the centers is not practical use of resources.

Sassaman states that we need to tell the commissioners we need more money to operate the convenience centers.

Wilson states that I can figure that out if I knew what level of scavenging they wanted. I don't want to dwell on this but I did want you to know that it is still an issue.

Hwy 57 Convenience Center Wilson states that there has been no change.

Smith asks when will it close?

Wilson states that the new owner has agreed to indefinite periods of two months extensions until there is a buyer or it's rezoned. We could get a two-month notice at any time.

Technotrash Can Pollock states that we received a query about collecting all media – cds, videotapes, etc. There is a company that will collect all the media and we pay postage for the box. There is a market it for it.

Sassaman states that it would be a good opportunity for Staples or Office Depot.

Wilson asks what do they do with them?

Pollock states that some stuff gets deconstructed.

Wilson suggests that this is incorporated into the solid waste management plan discussion. It could be another material diverted.

Vickers asks [Blair] when you did the waste characterization was this classed out?

Pollock replies no. We didn't contemplate that.

6. Other Business

- Wilson states that I met with representative of Habitat for Humanity. They are still interested. I have a letter from the County Planning Department that was sent to them [Habitat for Humanity] which puts in writing their interpretation of the rules and limitation on retail activity on Eubanks Road. It is sort of a soft no, however the local governments could through an amendment to the joint planning agreement change it where it could be allowed. Or they thought if the County as a local government wanted to operate it, it might be allowable. Where we go with this I don't know.
- Pollock states that RRSI are due to get us the draft report this week. The trajectory looks like if received by tomorrow, staff would turn around comments to them within a week and back to us the following week. Our objective is to get it out there before the end of the fiscal year so that the elected officials might have some marching orders for the summer.

Wilson states that there are some complications because the elected officials have accelerated meetings related to the budget and they will probably want to be accommodated to the extent as possible for their schedule.

- Sassaman states that the County is going through an environmental responsibility exercise. In March I received a letter from Barry that lists ten objectives but we had a full agenda in April, so I didn't bring it up until now. Two of them have been put into our hopper – continue to aggressively pursue waste reduction and recycling efforts including the reduction of paper, continue to expand and formally adopt the use of green building standards, construct new facility, deconstruct outdated facilities in a way that is eco-friendly utilizes energy conserving measures and minimizes impact on the environment. For each of these we are to come up with action strategies to promote.

Wilson states that Blair has prepared a draft and will give to you all soon that you all can add to or delete from.

Smith asks for the definition of "green".

Sassaman states that it means environmentally friendly. There is a certification for a building the meets certain standards.

Wilson gives examples: waste minimization, energy efficiency, and use of recycled materials

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Sassaman states that there is the LEED system that lists things such as if your building has a certain number of attributes it would be a LEED-certified building.

Wilson states that in the proposal we are preparing there are other things that we have a role in.

Tipton asks why this group was tasked with green building rather than Planning.

Sassaman notes that several departments have responsibility here including Planning, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and ERCDC.

Wilson states that other departments are contributing action items.

Pollock states that we are among those on the green building because we are building a building and because we have materials management.

Wilson states that we have also been a source of information for recycled materials, what is made from recycled materials

Tipton states that LEEDs incorporates many different areas than the solid waste management building material aspect. Green building is a lot of things and so we should clarify which aspect of green building this group should focus on rather than try to speak about all aspects.

Wilson clarifies that any aspect of LEED that is solid waste related, use of recycled materials or deconstructed materials are areas we should focus on.

Tipton comments that someone, not from this group, but the county should be LEED certified or accredited so they can be the contact for recommendations from each group and that on campus a goal is for most designers and project managers to become LEED certified.

Sassaman states that one of the objectives for the county may be to have staff go through certification.

Wilson states that we will have our draft ready for you by the next meeting.

Norwood moves to adjourn.

Smith 2nd

Adjourn 8:55 pm

Next meeting: June 1, 2006

Southern Human Services