Memorandum

To: Jan Sassaman, Chair
Solid Waste Advisory Board

From: Gayle Wilson, Director
Solid Waste Management

Subject: Solid Waste Plan Meeting Follow-up

Date: October 4, 2010

At the end of the September 29 public meeting a request was made of staff to prepare a responses/answers to the key issues raised at the meeting by the citizens who spoke. This memorandum is an attempt to respond in a concise but reasonably thorough manner.

- Concern about mandatory fee for a voluntary service, especially for churches. (rural curbside recycling collections)

The 3-R Fee was adopted by the Board of Commissioners (BOCC) in 2004 in response to a severe funding shortfall for the County's recycling programs and services. Since recycling and waste reduction was such an important and heavily demanded service within the County serious consideration was given to a variety of funding methodologies. Ultimately the 3-R Fee was adopted and has very successfully resolved the funding problems. In fact, it is considered a model of sustainable environmental funding across the state.

At that time there was considerable citizen and elected official interest in providing more recycling services in the unincorporated areas of Orange County. As a means of funding a quality service, and in the interest of expanding the convenience of recycling to encourage and persuade more participation in the desire to meet local waste reduction goals, the BOCC adopted a rural fee component that assessed the fee to all improved properties that were eligible to receive curbside recycling collection services. The fee applies likewise to non-profits, including churches, who were also encouraged to begin recycling. The BOCC made a conscious decision to apply the fee to non-profit property owners as well as those entities subject to property taxes. At the various public meetings and hearings held with regard to the 3-R Fee there was no citizen opposition. Based on our ongoing contact with the customers of our service we not only have not identified a broad opposition to these services we continue to receive requests for expansion. Participation in the service is not mandatory per se, but payment of the fee in areas eligible for the service is mandatory.

Subsequently, there have been incremental expansions to areas adjacent to existing routes and we continue to receive calls inquiring about future expansions. Recovered tonnages have increased from less than about 1,200/tons/year to over 1,800/tons/year during that time. We believe that without this service many of these customers would stop

recycling/recycle less and those who would then begin to deliver their material to convenience centers would further burden these already often hectic centers. Set-out rates on some of our rural collection routes reach 60%, which is extraordinary for a bi-weekly curbside program. The cost of $3.17 per household/month is considered reasonable and is in-line with other rural program costs across the state. We also believe it possible to reduce that rate to below $3.00/month through implementation of certain efficiencies such as single stream collection. We believe those areas where voluntary service exists and the fees are also voluntary observe very low participation. We further believe the simple act of mandatory fee payment results in more recycling and participation.

- Results of OCV's 881 household survey was not adequately taken into consideration in plan development, particularly as relates to:
    - Solid Waste Convenience Centers (SWCCs)
    - Curbside trash and recycling collection and franchising
    - Objection to new fees
    - Rural representation

Regarding the Solid Waste Convenience Centers, the Work Group has just recently adopted a recommendation to the BOCC that includes several elements recommended on the OCV website including maintaining all current sites, centralization of certain occasionally used services at central sites, expansion of hours of all sites to include weekend days and opening larger sites 6 days/week. The Work Group apparently did not agree with the concept of continued exclusive use of the general fund for financing SWCCs promoted by OCV. The draft Plan summarizes the Work Group recommendation, but does not state or imply that this recommendation has been adopted or endorsed by the BOCC. The draft Plan does clearly state that the future of SWCCs is a most important and pressing matter for addressing consistent with OCV's notion of the SWCCs being highly valued.

The discussion of options for the future of the SWCCs is expected to be presented to the BOCC this fall, and discussed until and probably through the upcoming fiscal year budget process before any final decisions are made. The Work Group is certainly open to any changes/revisions in wording that more clearly indicate the actual current status of this issue, although the Group is not anticipated to meet again prior to presentation of the draft Plan to the Boards. But to clarify, there is no concrete adopted plan to design, locate, operate, construct or finance the centers pursuant to the Work Group recommendation. The BOCC will make this determination at some point in the future.

Regarding curbside trash and recycling collection (and franchising) services, the draft Plan indicates that these subjects are topics for future planning discussion. While the Work Group did discuss these issues at some length, including the issues raised by various residents, no consensus was reached on a recommendation. The draft Plan contains no recommendations by the Work Group to initiate curbside trash pickup or franchise trash collections and does not recommend expanding curbside recycling. Additionally, OCV and their survey result input was again substantial and thoroughly

discussed and considered and at least partly responsible for the need to further discuss and deliberate. Based on comments made at the public meeting we have revised the wording on relevant sections of the draft Plan pertaining especially to rural waste and recycling collection. And we are open to further changes or revisions that clarify the actual status of these programs and services. Any plans to expand or change the current situation in rural Orange County with regard to curbside trash or recycling collections will likely be another topic of future discussion of the SWAB and BOCC.

Regarding the objection to new fees, no new fees have been approved by the BOCC and therefore no new fees are currently planned. Of course during the Work Group's many deliberations fees and financing of various methodologies were discussed and the Work Group actually has made some general recommendations with regard to funding SWCCs, with substantial input from the OCV and the survey. Some revisions have been made in the draft Plan to further clarify the issue and status of fees.

Rural representation, particularly from OCV, their survey and Bingham Township generally has been substantively taken into consideration by the Work Group. There have been considerable opportunities to discuss, inquire and to present opinions with regard to various solid waste related topics in various forums that have clearly impacted deliberations and outcomes. Their participation in solid waste matters has improved the dialogue and contributed to the availability of information. It is our belief and understanding that the record with regard to rural representation and input is unambiguous. The opportunity for rural input has been substantial and continuing. Lack of Work Group agreement on all aspects of input or suggestions does not indicate a lack of participation, but simply an independent discernment of the various elements or topics of discussion and the consideration of a broad array of points of view and opinions.

- Considering looking forward, has there been any contact with Chatham or Alamance County with regard to cooperation?

At the staff level there is an ongoing awareness and interaction with regard to opportunities for collaboration or cooperation with adjacent jurisdictions. Chatham County is currently exploring their long-term waste management options and is seriously considering a landfill at this point, along with potentially other waste management alternatives. Alamance County is not currently exploring landfill alternative at this point and has not historically been interested in receiving Orange County's waste. Additionally, it is my understanding that Randolph County has recently decided that they will develop a regional landfill and will be seeking customers.

- Inappropriateness of curbside recycling collection for rural areas.

Over the past two plus years the Work Group discussions of expansions or improvements to rural curbside recycling have frequently included potential limitations and difficulties of servicing certain areas such as private roads and long driveways. While there are collection practices and techniques to accommodate some of these limitations, the Work Group has been generally supportive of expanding the service into areas where it makes

sense, but has not adopted any specific recommendations about this service. The draft Plan acknowledges that this topic has been discussed and that these discussions may be continued in the next planning period. The state planning guidelines do not require detailed discussions of every topic considered within the County so the draft Plan doesn't go into detail about the various issues surrounding this topic. For clarification, the draft Plan does not contain recommendations to implement curbside trash collection or to expand curbside recycling collection. Some revisions to relevant wording in the draft Plan have been made.

- Concerns about SWCC improvements worth the investment, justification that the improvements are necessary, and a suggestion to lease compactors at one site to perform a pilot study of the projected benefits.

During the detailed discussion of SWCC issues the consultant Resource Recycling Systems (RRS) very clearly presented the business and operational case for various SWCC alternatives that include compaction and site improvements. Both the monetary and non-monetary benefits were also discussed at some length, with each Work Group member and probably each interested citizen expressing their own opinion. Ultimately the Work Group reached a consensus recommendation on various advantages/disadvantages and the cases made for the improvements.

With regard to the leasing of compactors, it is the opinion of staff, supported by RRS, that utilization of compactors and the advantages and benefits are common industry knowledge and have long ago become a standard waste management practice that a pilot study would be of no benefit locally. In addition, certain investments in providing power and at a minimum concrete pads for compactors would be necessary in order to initiate a pilot. Furthermore, without reorientation of some of the sites that are not currently arranged for compactor use and access, a reasonable demonstration may be difficult.

- Interest in expanding education regarding recycling and waste reduction, particularly targeting composting and churches and large institutions.

The County provides recycling collection for cans, bottles and paper at St. Thomas More and at their request we have provided the loan of two sets of small green recycling bins for their school's classrooms and offices to help demonstrate how their program could recycle more. Annually around Christmas time, for many of the past ten years we have sent a letter to all churches and other religious groups with a phone book listing in Orange County containing ideas for reduced waste holidays, offering churches a waste audit and explaining County recycling services and schedules. That letter has generated little response.

On request over the years staff members have worked directly with individual churches providing adult education discussions, classroom education for children on environmental issues, waste audits and discussion of how to green the church waste stream. County staff is available to work with any place of worship, specifically through Orange Justice

United, to develop a more effective outreach approach to getting the recycling and waste reduction message to the faith-based community.

- Concern about rural needs not being reflected in the draft Plan.

There was considerable rural input in the Work Group and SWAB discussions over the past two years with regard to the Plan. Both individual citizens and citizen groups were well represented in many discussions. Many of these discussions and Work Group deliberations were precisely about levels and types of services in the unincorporated areas. Several of the Work Group members are rural residents. The state planning document was not intended to be a detailed presentation of the various facets or elements in each geographic sector. The intention of the Work Group, for those issues for which no specific recommendations or decisions were made, was to simply indicate that various general issues were discussed and may be further discussed. All written comments received, including those from rural residents, and a summary of those made at the public meeting are intended to be incorporated into Appendix B and submitted along with the draft Plan.

- What are we doing with regard to alternative technologies?

The SWAB has discussed this issue several times and has hosted both an environmental group and an international incineration company representative at a regular SWAB meeting. A BOCC directed assessment of alternative technologies with a final report submitted in August 2008 can be found on the Solid Waste Department web site. Dr. Lou Circeo conducted a presentation on a plasma arc process at a forum sponsored by the SWAB earlier this year. Staff is and has been in communication with several representatives of different technologies on an ongoing basis and occasionally visits regional demonstrations when convenient.

In December of 2009 the BOCC adopted a resolution that contained the following:

"Direct county staff and the Solid Waste Advisory Board to establish a discrete timeline and framework for a public process to evaluate alternative methods for solid waste disposal, with an emphasis on strategies that are environmentally sensitive, socially responsible, cost-effective, and multi-jurisdictional across county lines. Said framework for evaluation to return to the Board no sooner than September 2010."

- What is the status of using the Durham Transfer Station?

The BOCC has resolved to deliver Orange County collected waste to the City of Durham Transfer Station for a period of between 3 and 5 years, beginning when the landfill closes. The Towns are still evaluating their options and have yet to make a decision as to whether they will join Orange County or use another facility.

- When is the date certain for landfill closure?

The landfill is nearing capacity, but there is no way to be precise when projecting when permitted capacity will be reached. There are many variables that contribute to the utilization of remaining capacity. The facility operating permit contains a volumetric limitation that cannot be exceeded. Best current projections indicate reaching capacity between March and June 2013.

- Concern was expressed about the reduction in hours of operation at SWCCs contributing to illegal dumping and the lack of roadside litter collection by Orange County.

Recent budget based reduction in hours at SWCCs has not resulted in increased reports to the environmental enforcement staff of illegal dumping. With regard to the Rogers Road area, no reports of illegal dumping have been reported to our office. That doesn't necessarily indicate that no illegal dumping is taking place; just that it is not being reported with a request for enforcement action. Increasing hours at SWCCs has recently been recommended by the Work Group in conjunction with other SWCC recommendations.

With regard to roadside litter collection, the revised list of neighborhood enhancements adopted in 2007 by the Historic Rogers Road Community Enhancement Plan Development and Monitoring Task Force included an enhancement item that required litter collection on Eubanks Road at least twice weekly and on Rogers Road from Eubanks Road to Meadow Run County twice weekly. Litter collection on the remainder of Rogers Road to Homestead Road has remained at twice annually. Landfill staff closely adheres to these schedules and on Eubanks Road large pieces of litter are collected when observed, even if outside the regular schedule.

- Question about insufficient assistance from Solid Waste Management with regard to a neighborhood composting program for Rogers Road neighborhood.

Ms. Sarah Hatcher (UNC-Engineers Without Borders) got in touch with the Solid Waste Management Department in March of 2010 asking if we had compost bins we could give to Rogers Eubanks Neighborhood Association (RENA) to use at the community garden they were constructing. The compost demonstration site in Hillsborough had recently been dismantled, so we gave them two of the manufactured bins that had been on display there. They were not new, were lightly used and still very serviceable, and typically retail for $90 or more.

Muriel Williman of Solid Waste Management arranged a time with Ms. Hatcher and representatives of the RENA to help set up the compost bins and discuss possible composting programs. She met with David Caldwell, Barbara Hopkins and Sarah Hatcher of RENA on March 30. Muriel conducted a compost talk, gave out informational brochures, and set up the two bins near the garden. The group discussed the possibility of having Muriel conduct a composting demonstration for the neighborhood gardeners in the future with some enthusiasm. A plan was devised to divert salad waste from an upcoming community potluck on April 9 to start the compost pile. Orange County Solid

Waste Management delivered compost collection carts for the event, per Sarah Hatcher's direction, with the understanding that this is for their backyard compost~ strictly greens, napkins OK. The containers were collected the following week, having been left unused at the same place where they were dropped off. No further requests or inquiries from the RENA group have occurred. The Solid Waste Management Department is available and eager to assist/advise any neighborhood in the County with their waste reduction needs.

- Why are rural neighborhoods being ignored with regard to comments on rural waste management services?

Consistent with previous statements in this memorandum, the Work Group, SWAB and BOCC meetings where solid waste issues are discussed have all been open to citizen communication and numerous rural residents have availed themselves to the opportunity. During the multi-year discussions of the Work Group many discussions have taken place regarding rural services and various viewpoints have been presented. The SWAB contains representatives from the unincorporated areas. The rural area historically has not spoken with one voice and we continue to receive calls for expansion of services in rural Orange County while other residents seek to reduce services or increase alternative services. All of the various opinions were considered as the Work Group debated and ultimately developed a recommendation related to SWCCs that will be presented to the BOCC later this year.

- Why isn't the waste reduction goal 100% rather than 61%?

As a practical matter the economic and social prerogatives necessary to achieve such an extreme objective would be untenable politically and budgetarily.

- We need to look at Carolina North for a possible partnership for waste incineration for power generation.

Orange County is currently partnering with UNC on a landfill gas recovery project and would welcome any entreaty by UNC to pursue a potential technologically based waste management opportunity.

- Would the SWAB provide a forum for presentation of the results of an investigation of health and quality of life concerns of landfill neighbors related to landfill odors?

Yes, the SWAB would welcome an opportunity to provide a forum for this presentation, although the next couple of SWAB agendas are full. Perhaps the December or January agendas would be suitable.