

Solid Waste Advisory Group Meeting Summary

DATE: February 11, 2021

LOCATION: Zoom

MEMBERS PRESENT: Commissioner Jean Hamilton, Commissioner Jamezetta Bedford, Council Member Randee Haven-O'Donnell, UNC Healthcare Representative Dan Lehman, Mayor Lydia Lavelle, Mayor Pam Hemminger, Commissioner Robb English, Commissioner Matt Hughes

MEMBERS ABSENT: Council Member Karen Stegman

STAFF PRESENT: County Solid Waste Director Robert Williams, Chapel Hill Public Works Director Lance Norris, County Solid Waste Staff: Bruce Woody, Andrew Martin, Blair Pollock, Cheryl Young, Kyra Levau, Nora Ketchie, Chapel Hill Public Works Staff Wendy Simmons, UNC Staff: Kristin Young

Call to Order

Approval of October 19, 2020 Meeting Summary

Approved

Action Items

Solid Waste Master Plan Update

Williams The Solid Waste Master Plan RFP will be posted in the next few days. A consulting firm will look at what we're currently doing and what we need to do in the future to move towards an 80% diversion, or quasi-zero waste. We'll never get to zero waste, but by definition we are looking to bring in new technologies, new ideas, concepts, to divert material that can be reused, recycled here in Orange County. Part of that will include the Towns, but more importantly one of the things we are going to push is that community engagement be a big part of that process to include as many residents and neighborhoods to participate in this process to find out which way they want us to go with regard to waste reduction here in Orange County. SWAG, you will be a part of it as well; they will definitely share with you the information that they collect and gather over time. We're estimating it to be a year and a half to two years to complete the entire process and then we can go from there.

Triangle Region Solid Waste Consortium Update

Williams Similar to what SWAG is doing with solid waste here in Orange County I took it upon myself to get in contact with some Directors outside of Orange County. What we discovered is that a year and a half ago one of our processors had us competing against each other and they were getting increased pricing. We're trying to accomplish the same thing, get our citizens the best bang for the buck. We also recruited Triangle J to help us with that effort, and we'll be sending up an MOU that we'll be using to get approved by our local officials that will allow us to continue the process.

Bedford Would that be coming to the County Commissioners, and then would it be the usual courtesy that we would then share it with the Town Councils? What are the operations? How does it work?

Williams Yes. It will come to consent from the Board of County Commissioners. A point of clarification about the consortium – Orange County represents the Towns for matters of this nature, but we do let the Towns know where we are.

Multi-Unit Housing Bag Program Update

Levau The Apartment Bag Program is something that we started in 2020 as a pilot program at 11 complexes, a total of 1,213 units. Because we knew that over 25% of the trash at apartments could be recycled in the blue recycling carts, and from the recycling carts 11% of what is in there is considered contamination. We used the *Recycle Right* tote bags that had all of our recycling information on the front and back in English and in Spanish, and a list of items to keep out of the recycling cart. Bags were distributed to the residents at each participating complex recycling right signs were installed at each of the recycling sites.

The main takeaways from this program are that the recycling tote bag did prove to reduce contamination in all of the complexes that participated and that the most effective bag distribution is for Orange County staff to distribute the bags to each resident at their door.

Hamilton How many apartment complexes are you going to be targeting in the second round?

Levau As of right now we have a list of 12 apartment complexes that our recycling driver has identified as poor performers, but it's not guaranteed that we'll receive a response from all of them. If not then we'll expand to others.

Hamilton And do you expect, if the second round that you find the same improvement, you will expand this program to all apartment complexes?

Levau We do have a goal of distributing 1000 bags in the next year. If we do see that all of the complexes show improvement we are going to continuously expand this in a sustainable manner.

Hamilton And how much are the bags?

Pollock The average cost, price per bag, was around \$1.70.

Glass On The Side Update

Pollock About 2 years ago the recycling market started to go upside down. Where we used to get \$50 per ton we're now paying \$60/ton. One of the ways to reduce the cost burden was to separate the heaviest materials, which is glass bottles and jars. About 75 miles east of us in Wilson there is a glass plant and they said any of the mixed colored glass that you can bring us we'll pay you \$20 per ton. We looked at what the potential was based on our recycling composition study so in the commercial sector about half of the recycling we retrieved was glass, and the total glass that was possible to get if we collected every bottle was about 2,600 tons of glass. To put that in context, every year we send about 13,000 tons of mixed recyclables to the processing center, so about 20% is glass.

In the first 14 months of the program we've collected over 360 tons of glass. That income all comes back to Orange County, making all the effort worthwhile. Recently we finished putting drop-off containers at all the sites and we're pushing forward to get more people using them. We've got another intern from UNC who's going to be doing door knocking at bars and restaurants to flesh out the downtown Chapel Hill and Carrboro route, and after that she'll be expanding to the Hillsborough downtown district as well as the outlying areas in Carrboro and Chapel Hill. In the future we hope to expand to multi-family housing. We don't have any intention of making a curbside program, but we do want to encourage voluntary use of the separated glass programs. We hope by the end of next year to be at 20% of that 2,600 tons being recovered, so we're well on the way.

Hemminger If you want to write up a draft press release with all of that information we can tweak it and all send it out.

Hamilton I would like the messaging about glass to be included on the cards.

Pollock We have a postcard scheduled for people in the urban area soon and then the annual card will go to people in the rural area in June. We'll push to make the GOTS information part of the cards.

Orange County Solid Waste Management Budget

Williams A part of the Inter-local Agreement that Orange County has with the towns of Carrboro, Chapel Hill, and Hillsborough is to inform them of any changes to the Solid Waste Programs Fee. Due to the current situation and budget restraints Orange County Solid Waste is not looking to add new programs. We are going to continue to sustain what we have until the economy has changed. We will not be requesting a Solid Waste Programs Fee increase.

Hemminger Have we evaluated what a small increase in fee could do in terms of doing more composting projects in the County? There may be an opportunity where a small increase could help us really make a huge difference in reducing what we actually are trucking to the Transfer Station.

Williams That's something we can look at - do a cost comparison with the fee and what it could potentially bring out of the waste stream in regards to organics.

Young We have met with Brooks and Compost Now and they will both get us information soon on what capacity they have for additional material and site pick-ups.

Capital Projects

Williams There are two capital projects. The first is the High Rock Waste and Recycling Center upgrades, similar to what happened at Walnut. The footprint will remain the same, but we're adding compactors there which will make us more efficient with hauling materials from that far out in Orange County. Vegetative waste, electronics waste, and organics will be added.

We also have the C&D Landfill Phase II. We are running out of room at the current site so we have to make way for the new site. Construction will be beginning soon. We've gone to NCDEQ for their approvals of our permits for our construction and we've had to answer a few questions, but the engineering firm we're working with is on it and we should be hearing something relatively soon.

Next Meeting

Williams We typically hold these meetings quarterly, so that'll take us to May. A Doodle Poll will be sent.

Public Comment

None

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at: 7:45 pm

Name of Minute Taker: Nora Ketchie