

Solid Waste Advisory Group Meeting Summary

DATE: October 19, 2020

LOCATION: Go To Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: County Commissioner Mark Marcoplos, County Commissioner Penny Rich, Chapel Hill Mayor Pam Hemminger, Carrboro Mayor Lydia Lavelle, Chapel Hill Council Member Karen Stegman, Carrboro Town Council Member Randee Haven-O'Donnell, Hillsborough Commissioner Matt Hughes, Hillsborough Town Commissioner Robb English, UNC-Healthcare Representative Dan Lehman

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: County Solid Waste Director Robert Williams, Chapel Hill Public Works Director Lance Norris, Carrboro Public Works Director Joe Guckavan, County Solid Waste Staff: Andrew Martin, Blair Pollock, Cheryl Young, Kristina Witosky, Kyra Levau, Nora Ketchie, Chapel Hill Public Works Staff Wendy Simmons, UNC-Chapel Hill Solid Waste BJ Tipton

Call to Order

Approval of February 17 Meeting Summary

Approved

Action Items

Waste Zero (Simple Recycling) Update: Robert Williams, Director – Orange County Solid Waste

Williams states that Waste Zero (Simple Recycling) is no longer providing textile curbside collections in North Carolina, and that we have not found other companies that provide that service.

Breakdown of Waste Stream: Robert Williams, Director – Orange County Solid Waste

Williams states that the last waste composition study was done in 2017 (industry standard is every 5 years). Compostable Materials (food waste, paper, wood, yard waste, rubber) were 46.5%, Program Recyclables (newspaper, cardboard, paperboard, recyclable plastic containers, metal cans, glass) were 21.2%, Potential Recyclables (textiles, other metal, recoverable hazardous waste, reusable waste, electronic waste) were 10%, and All Other Waste (non-recoverable plastic, diapers, other materials) was 22.4%. These numbers include the Towns as well as the County.

Haven O'Donnell asks how the last 8 months of COVID have affected the waste stream.

Williams responds that we have not seen a significant decline of people using our services. We have replaced the 18 gallon bins with 95 gallon carts to reduce contact collections.

Glass on the Side Update: Kyra Levau, Education and Outreach Coordinator – Orange County Solid Waste

Levau states that on October 1st glass only containers were deployed to each of the 4 unstaffed drop off sites. For the first 3 days staff members were present to educate the public about our glass on the side program. 266 customer interactions occurred over 39 hours. Special emphasis was placed on the fact that this is a voluntary program and that glass is still able to be collected curbside in their mixed recyclables.

Williams adds that we are partnering with Durham and Alamance Counties and that the program is partially funded by a grant from NCDEQ.

Hillsborough Public Works Director: Robert Williams, Director – Orange County Solid Waste

Williams announces that the Hillsborough Public Works Director, Ken Hines, will be retiring on December 4th.

Orange County Solid Waste Master Plan Update: Robert Williams, Director – Orange County Solid Waste

Williams states that the suggested changes to the 8 goals of the Solid Waste Master Plan from February's meeting have been incorporated. The next step will be to finalize and post an RFP in mid-November. The goals will tie into the Scope of Work that the selected firm will be completing.

Haven-O'Donnell suggests that Goal 4 be more specific and say racial equity and justice instead of just social. Marcoplos seconds.

Williams states that it the change will be incorporated into the final version for the RFP.

Multi Unit Housing Bag Program: Kyra Levau, Education and Outreach Coordinator – Orange County Solid Waste

Levau states that a total of 1,254 re-usable bags were delivered and 17 signs were distributed between the 11 apartment complexes in the pilot program. Site evaluations were done prior to bag distribution on an A-F scale

based on how many contaminants were present in recycling carts. After a month follow-up site evaluations will be completed to determine whether the bag program is an effective way to mitigate contamination issues in apartment complexes.

Rich asks if apartment complexes have more contamination than single family home bins.

Levau responds that there are higher rates of contamination in apartment complexes, and that studies have shown the reusable tote bag to be effective, so hopefully we see positive results.

Rich asks if we fine apartment complexes if they are not complying with recycling guidelines?

Levau responds that she does not believe so. We give them an OOPS tag as a first warning and will work closely with them to improve their contamination rate. There have been a few circumstances where recycling carts have been removed from complexes due to non-compliance.

Rich asks how to prevent contamination from happening and states that the tote bags are a great idea.

Williams responds that the SWMP will give ideas on how best to reduce the contamination rate, educate the public, look at what's deterring people from recycling –, so we'll use that to build a better program and reduce contamination rates.

Lavelle asks which 11 complexes are participating in the pilot program?

Levau responds that 2 are public housing. All 11 vary in terms of size and location, ranging from 12 to 200 unit complexes.

Williams asks if Lavelle would like the full list emailed. Lavelle agrees and the request is seconded.

Hughes states that he sees the instruction on the bag to not place your recyclables in a plastic bag. He then explains that he has seen garbage bags marketed for use in municipal recycling programs and asks if those should not be used, and if not, are we seeing them enough to warrant a public information campaign to discourage use?

Levau explains that bags are an issue and that the ones marketed for recycling are not recyclable and just a tactic for companies to sell more bags. More education on plastic bag use is always needed.

Williams explains that if a bag of recyclables makes it to the processor they just remove it from the line and send it to the landfill.

Pollock adds that it is an issue with some of the newer apartment complexes with valet service, where the valet companies are encouraging residents to bag their recyclables.

Hughes states that we should get the jurisdictions together for a social media campaign or newsletter to remind citizens not to use plastic bags. It is seconded.

Lavelle states that a ban on plastic bags came into effect for New York State and asks Williams if there is any talk about the potential for a similar ban in North Carolina.

Williams responds that it has not come up yet, but will broach the topic with the other directors at the next Triangle Region Solid Waste Consortium meeting and give SWAG an update.

Next Meeting

Marcoplos asks how often we would like to meet now.

Hughes suggests we return to quarterly meetings, with the possibility of additional meetings once the SWMP is underway. All agree.

A Doodle Poll will be sent along with additional materials in early January.

Public Comment

None

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at: 7:14 pm

Name of Minute Taker: Nora Ketchie