

King County Solid Waste Advisory Committee
July 20, 2018 - 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
King Street Center 8th Floor Conference Center

Meeting Minutes

<u>Members Present</u>	<u>King County Staff</u>	<u>Others</u>
April Atwood - Vice Chair	Jamey Barker	Heather Trim, Zero Waste Washington
Elly Bunzendahl	Jennifer Devlin	
Gib Dammann	Beth Humphreys	
Karen Dawson	Pat D. McLaughlin	
Kevin Kelly - Chair	Meg Moorehead	
Keith Livingston	Belinda Morrison	
Ken Marshall	Aleks Posielski	
Barbara Ristau	Terra Rose	
Penny Sweet	Dorian Waller	
	John Walsh	

Minutes

The May and June SWAC minutes were approved unanimously.

Updates

Solid Waste Division (SWD)

Solid Waste Division Director Pat D. McLaughlin provided SWD updates:

Legislative transmittals

- The Executive Proposed Solid Waste Disposal Fees for 2019-2020 has been transmitted to the County Council for consideration.
- The Solid Waste Draft Comprehensive Plan is currently being reviewed by the Executive’s Office. It is due for transmittal to the County Council on July 26th.

Comp Plan briefings

The Solid Waste Division met with representatives from cities such as Federal Way and Sammamish to further discuss the Comp Plan as it relates to their community. Other municipalities who may want briefings with their council or key staff please let us know.

Joint Advisory Committee Meeting Field Trip in August

On August 10, Advisory Committee members will attend a field trip to Sound Sustainable Farms in Redmond to learn about how Cedar Grove compost is used in agriculture. Please wear shoes that can get dirty. SWD Government Relations Administrator Dorian Waller will email more information to members next week.

MSWMAC

Penny Sweet, MSWMAC Chair, gave the MSWMAC update for the July meeting noting the agenda was the same as today’s SWAC meeting, but the majority of the discussion was in regard to the draft Advisory Committee letter to the county executive or council. Sweet said some cities (Bellevue, Redmond, Newcastle, Sammamish, and Lake Forest Park) did not feel comfortable representing their council’s opinions yet and did not vote to sign the letter, although many of their cities did submit positive feedback during the public comment period. Sweet said the intent of the letter was to show

council the Advisory Committees had their eyes on the draft Comp Plan, have paid attention throughout the process of creating it, had no problems with it as it is currently drafted, and suggest the council make no heavy edits or provisos.

Comp Plan Advisory Letter

SWAC Chair Kevin Kelly said the SWAC version of the Advisory Letter is unchanged from the draft presented at the June meeting where there was no quorum so no vote was taken to submit the letter at that time. He asked if anyone had any comments, changes, or suggestions since he had not received any feedback within the past month. Keith Livingston said the word “strongly” is not necessary (in the first sentence of the second paragraph). Kelly asked if everyone was good with that; everyone agreed. April Atwood said there was one change to the draft letter made since last month’s meeting: the phrase “as the next step” was added to the last sentence of the third paragraph to reflect Phillippa Kassover’s concern about continued landfilling being inaccurately perceived as a long-term disposal option. Marshall said the Vice Chair’s name should be added to the letter since she authored the draft. Livingston made the motion to accept the letter as amended and submit to the county executive and council. Sweet seconded the motion and the vote passed unanimously.

Gib Dammann said he had one concern about the whole comprehensive plan process; he said the challenge for the advisory committees and the division is the research and development (R&D), and how to provide awareness to the community, offer more services at transfer stations, and educate citizens to use the services correctly. He said he would like to see these elements as a budgetary assignment and written into policies. Sweet agreed and noted that with the China Sword situation, the education process will be significant. Sweet said we all will have to do a better job to inform constituents but the first step is being clear about what goes in the blue cart. She said she sees the current situation as an opportunity to do education in a more comprehensive way. Marshall said about 100 percent of the West Coast’s recycling was sent to China, and now they have placed contamination levels at a place where no one can match so by 2021, China won’t accept any more. Marshall said we don’t know what can be processed here and it makes it hard to get communication out and make sure it’s correct. He said we have to wait until the task force has finished their work so we can speak with one message.

McLaughlin said these comments are all relevant to today’s discussion which will include data about the nature of where we are going, and what our R&D looks like so we can discover the next approach, sorting the right bins, and an update will speak to that today. Kelly said it was the obligation of the Advisory Committee to continue to follow up, provide advice, and make sure King County is following the guidelines in the Comp Plan. He said no plan is ever perfect, but this one is a good start, so keep asking questions and provide good advice so King County is heading in the right direction.

Recycling and Resource Recovery Innovations

McLaughlin began his [presentation](#) on the division’s upcoming Request for Information (RFI) with the reminder the division has been studying ways to improve recycling since 70 percent of what is disposed in the landfill could have been reused. The division is also interested in innovations for treatment, processing, education, and outreach and thus the new broad scope RFI. The division has no solutions in mind but want to focus on addressing the challenges of the flattened recycling rate, contamination of recycled materials, and the burying resources. McLaughlin said the division invites anyone to help us solve these problems.

Sweet asked if a secondary MRF (Materials Recovery Facility) would be able to respond to the RFI. McLaughlin said yes and explained that a secondary MRF recovers additional resources from residuals leftover from the sorting process at a MRF. He noted it is possible to separate anything from a waste stream, but product stewardship and market development were also worthwhile pursuits; just because

we can separate things from the waste stream does not always mean we should, especially if there is no market for it.

McLaughlin said another reason for the RFI is the division's goal to have zero waste of resources, and last year over 900,000 tons of material was sent to the landfill. This RFI, he said, is an efficient way to bring ideas forward. Barbara Ristau asked where the RFI would be posted; SWD's Strategy and Performance Manager John Walsh said everyone on the advisory committees would receive a copy of it. Walsh said it will go to organizations who have solicited the division in the past and also be published through regular county procurement channels. Ristau said it would be a good idea to send it to colleges and high schools to get younger perspectives.

McLaughlin said the RFI will be posted the first week in August with responses due in late August. The division will share initial responses with advisory committees at the September meetings, with more submissions and findings to be presented on in October. Atwood asked if submitting an RFI would be a requirement for submitting a response to an RFP (Request for Proposal). McLaughlin said there would be no RFPs for an idea if it was not submitted as an RFI. Atwood said the timeline seemed pretty short and might not allow enough time to spread the word broadly. She asked if the division would consider extending the response time. McLaughlin said this might be a recurring invitation since nothing prevents the division from asking for more ideas again, which will happen if there aren't enough viable ideas; he said the division will make adjustments to the RFI as needed.

Ristau expressed her support for the RFI saying it was a great idea. She also said she is interested in making sure new voices are added to the established voices and the posting is broadcast wide.

Responsible Recycling Task Force

Moorehead began her update on the progress of the Responsible Recycling Task Force with a reminder that when the draft Comp Plan is under review by county council it will be open for public review again. She asked how many SWAC would like a hard copy of the Comp Plan. Sweet mentioned the cities have all asked for a hard copy to make available for those interested in borrowing it. Kelly suggested the libraries should each get a copy. Livingston asked how much it cost to produce a hard copy; Moorehead said \$25. Elly Bunzendahl said she did not think anyone should get a hard copy of the intermediate draft Comp Plan, but the libraries should have copies of the final Comp Plan. Dammann suggested the libraries get an intermediate copy and then later receive addendums with any updated content. Moorehead said that might be an awkward solution since changes may be spread over several chapters. Kelly asked how much more public comment could there be; Moorehead said it was an open process, open to public testimony so there is no way to know. Kelly suggested intermediate copies should go to city halls, but final copies should go to the libraries. Dammann requested a hard copy.

Moorehead said the Responsible Recycling Task Force exists as a fact-finding body to help the division and the advisory committees better understand polices and how we might better respond. She said before China Sword, most of the region's recycling was processed domestically; last year China took 20 percent of recycled materials, mostly paper. She noted prices of recycled paper fluctuate over time and while it is currently low, it is not at a historic low. Kelly suggested the Price Context graph on slide 22 could benefit from an overlay of paper volumes.

Moorehead said 86 percent of recycling is not affected by China Sword since glass, yard waste, etc. are processed locally. Last year, China received 14 percent of recyclables, namely paper and plastic. This is still a major market disruption. Alternative markets, such as in India, are not as developed as in China. Contamination makes material unmarketable so MRFs are investing in retooling their systems to lower contamination which adds to the cost of recycling; so higher costs and lower prices are creating different net profits than what was expected when contracts between the cities and the haulers were negotiated.

So haulers have approached the Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) to ask for surcharges. The UTC agreed to add a six-month surcharge ranging from \$0.41 - \$1.01 a month to utility bills. Marshall said he has seen surcharges as high as \$3.40 a month in Everett. Moorehead said she did not know how the UTC arrives at the surcharge amount just that it varies by area and contract.

Moorehead said waivers are another way haulers are adapting to the market disruption. Waivers, granted by cities, give haulers permission to dispose of contaminated recyclables in a landfill. The task force views the granting of waivers as a last resort if haulers are unable to reduce contamination, find new markets, or benefit from surcharges.

McLaughlin said King County has a code that says if waste is collected within King County it needs to be disposed of in King County, but we have not been in this situation where we have not had marketable materials before so Republic did send some contaminated materials to their landfill. McLaughlin said the division does not get reports from the haulers or MRFs, only from the Department of Ecology, and their data is limited. Marshall reiterated his support behind sending King County's waste to the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill so the county can collect revenues from the tipping fees. Moorehead said some of the waivers did have end dates and some did not; so the task force recommends standardizing key elements to the process of requesting and granting waivers.

Livingston asked why the contracts do not require reporting; Moorehead said the county does not have leverage to make reporting a requirement but she understands most cities do not have staffing levels that allow for evaluating reports. She said this situation has certainly highlighted the importance of robust reporting. Livingston suggested the next ILA make it a requirement.

Karen Dawson said she attended the state Department of Ecology's SWAC meeting and heard a good presentation by Allison Kingfisher about reporting requirements between the state, MRFs and health departments. She suggested Kingfisher be invited to King County's advisory committee meetings to make the same presentation. Beth Humphreys cited a relevant action in Chapter 3, Section 4 of the draft Comp Plan that states: *"Standardize the sampling methodology and frequency in tonnage reports submitted to the division and the cities by the collection companies to improve data accuracy."* Dawson said she heard Ecology is considering legislative action to require future solid waste comprehensive plans to include contingency plans for market declines.

Moorehead said the task force also discussed the range of allowable recyclable materials by the various jurisdictions. Materials that are recycled by 100 percent of the system's jurisdictions make up 90 percent of the volume of the curbside collection. These materials will be the subject of "clean, dry, and empty" messages. The remaining 10 percent of recycled materials is the source of a lot of contamination given the confusion over whether or not a particular item is recyclable in a given jurisdiction. This is a matter that will need to be discussed among the advisory committees: whether these materials will be added to the standards list or removed from the recycling stream altogether. Marshall said it is also important to address the contamination of recyclables collected from commercial entities.

Moorehead said the task force also discussed whether collecting some materials in the comingled recycling bin is the right approach. The task force also has a Communications Consortium which is in the processes of creating a communications toolkit consisting of consistent messages and social media posts. Dammann said simplicity and uniformity across the entire region is very important. Kelly said the solid waste industry is the 4th or 5th most dangerous profession and is already suffering from a driver shortage. He said costs will increase if there is a need to increase truck trips and refit MRFs to accommodate single stream recyclables. Atwood said in order to address the driver shortage, drivers will need to be paid more, but we are already not accounting for all the costs such as social justice

impacts. Moorehead said externalities like the environment and labor should be addressed in the development of the standards.

Marshall said Kelly is right, the industry is the 5th most dangerous and the one way to keep drivers safe is to keep them in their trucks and use automated collection systems. He said there have been three deaths already this year. Marshall said when he started as a driver for recycling in 1993, he would bend over and pick up three little bins at 800 stops for a total of 2,400 times a day which puts a lot of wear on a body. Atwood said doing things differently now does not have to look like the old ways. Dawson said contamination in yard waste collection is inevitable when a driver cannot see the load; being able to see the material is essential to spotting contamination early.

Moorehead asked SWAC to consider the topics brought forth by the task force: creating a standard approach to waivers, reducing contamination, the communications toolkit, and surcharges. She asked what role SWAC thinks SWAC should have in regards to these topics. Dawson said Ecology has a parallel task force doing the same kind of work; she suggested there should be some bridge between these efforts, maybe video conferencing. Kelly said that was already happening informally, and noted recycling in King County is different than recycling in Yakima. McLaughlin said he sits on a statewide task force and knows others look to King County for direction. He asked SWAC to wrestle with the recommendations put forth by the task force and decide if any of these recommendations are “low-hanging fruit” with little to no barriers, or did they need more information before they make a decision.

Livingston asked what haulers could do about the markets, since they’re always changing. He then suggested it would be best to focus on our own county’s needs; the others can look to us all they want but they can’t duplicate what we have. Kelly agreed, many jurisdictions do not have the county’s infrastructure. Marshall said the task force has two sides represented; one is Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) who takes in all their revenue, and the cities who, as Moorehead pointed out, do not have any manpower and do not want to assume those responsibilities so they put it on the haulers. He also pointed out the packaging industry is not at the table yet; Moorehead said someone from Amazon agreed to attend a meeting but they have not agreed to speak yet.

Kelly said receiving task force updates is helpful, maybe not to this degree every time, but it should be included on the agenda. He suggested scheduling more joint meetings with MSWMAC when ideas can be more thought through. Moorehead asked if SWAC would like to dive into a discussion about the contents of the blue bin at the September or November meeting. Bunzendahl asked if this should go hand-in-hand with the RFI; Moorehead said the conversation does not have to wait for the RFI.

Marshall said the task force also discussed banning plastic bags and shredded paper and asked why SWAC can’t discuss that now. McLaughlin said they also discussed surcharges and waivers. Bunzendahl asked if we can decide we don’t want plastic bags. McLaughlin said you can decide if don’t want them in the blue bin because they can be recycled elsewhere. Kelly said the task force was set up to do the deep dive into the issues and the advisory committee role is to advise the county if recommendations should be approved yea or nay. Moorehead said you can decide if you want bags out of the recycling collection system, but you cannot decide for Kirkland. She said if you use your voice and say this region is better off without them, then the cities will hear you. McLaughlin said you are in a position that becomes a point of influence for change, or when these matters go to council, your opinion can be a point of reference.

Bunzendahl said it would be great to discuss the top issues with an idea of what the potential next steps are; she asked what SWAC work plan look like or does SWAC work on that together. She also said once the Comp Plan is approved, there are a lot of action items in there that can some dates put on them. Kelly suggested that since the August meeting is a field trip, in September, they should plan to decide to

discuss two issues. Ristau suggested discussing waivers and the contents of the blue bin first so they will be able to discuss the communications toolkit later.

Member and Public Comment

Atwood asked about the issue of multi-family collection since that has not been a topic of conversation in a while and it used to be a huge problem. Kelly said it should be a discussion to add to the work plan.

Kelly reminded the advisory committee the next meeting will be on August 10 at 11 a.m. and Dorian Waller will be sending out an email with more information next week; carpools can be organized amongst each other.

Respectfully submitted by: Jenny Devlin