

**King County Solid Waste Advisory Committee
July 17, 2020 - 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.
Virtual Meeting (Zoom)**

Meeting Minutes

<u>Members Present</u>
Kevin Kelly—Chair
Gib Dammann
Phillipa Kassover
James Borsum
Stephen Strader
April Atwood-Vice Chair
Ken Marshall
Heather Trim
Robin Freedman
Karen Dawson
Penny Sweet
Lee Momon
Gib Dammann

<u>King County Staff</u>
Lindy Oliver Honaker
Hilary Leonard
Pat McLaughlin
Jeff Gaisford
Joy Carpine-Cazzanti
Dorian Waller
Brian Halverson
Eyasu Ayalew
Matt Manguso

<u>Others</u>
Lane Covington
Jackie Wheeler
Amanda Godwin
Wendy Weiker
Said Mohammed Mohammed
Derrick Xian
Yasmin Mohammid

Minutes

Minutes of the June SWAC meeting were approved as presented.

Public Comments

There was no public comment.

Updates

SWD Director Pat McLoughlin provided the SWD update:

COVID-19 Related Activities

Our absenteeism rates remain low, allowing us to continue serving the public. We’re transitioning ID checks by our consultants to checks conducted by SWD staff. Following the orders of the governor’s statewide mask mandate, we’re requiring all employees and customers to wear masks. We’re still maintaining social distancing measures at our stations including closing off half of our self-haul stalls.

Tonnage and Transactions

We continue to track actual tons and transactions in 2020 compared to 2019. Year-to-date our tonnage is down almost 2 percent while transactions are up a little over 2 percent.

Houghton Landfill

We’ve made progress with the Houghton Landfill’s gas system. We monitor gas levels daily and have not detected gas migration offsite. New equipment has been successfully installed, including a blowing system and new perimeter wells. Under Public Health’s guidance we’re decreasing checks.

DNRP Permanent Teleworking

DNRP's GreenWhereWeWork (GWWW) project will transition 800 department employees to permanent teleworking by the end of 2020. DNRP will retain one floor at King Street Center for a collaboration hub. SWD employees traditionally in the downtown office will permanently telecommute, however, SWD is not eliminating in-person gatherings. We expect the change will bring environmental and economic benefits. If this committee elects to convene in-person in the future, we're happy to support.

Marshall commented that he has been awaiting a response from SWD to an email he sent concerning Republic Services' contract with DTG. Republic Services is selling residuals from their Sodo facility. The amount averages about 8-10 truckloads a day. He was informed that King County is aware of the contract. McLoughlin responded that SWD is familiar with the issue and is actively investigating the situation. Some of the residuals are likely materials generated in King County. Notices have been sent to comply with flow control requirements. Gaisford added that DTG has several processing facilities in our region for construction and demolition(C&D) materials. SWD has agreements with those facilities and through our enforcement personnel we found out they are sending materials to their facility in Woodinville. We put them on notice for both C&D and MSW and are following up.

Marshall commented that in the past the division took more direct action. He'll continue to investigate and will follow up by email. McLoughlin added that SWD is taking the same approach to enforcement and policy as in the past.

Trim asked if SWD employees have access to COVID-19 tests. McLoughlin responded that SWD does not administer or require direct testing as a precautionary measure. We do ask employees to get tested if they experience symptoms and we provide information on how they can access tests.

Trim asked if materials are possibly going from King County to the Spokane incinerator. McLoughlin answered that it's possible, however it is against flow control requirements and would be illegal. We have no knowledge of that happening.

Kassover asked for clarification on how flow control enforcement works between King County and the cities and whether King County actively works with cities to pursue enforcement. McLoughlin responded that King County can administer a financial punishment of around \$250/day for flow control violations. It's comparatively insignificant to the fines cities are able to wield against haulers because they have the direct contract. For example, SWD is working with Kirkland directly and they've been proactive in levying fines. We can't speak to the outcome yet because there was an appeal submitted. It's still being managed between the city and hauler.

Kassover asked if King County can update the code with steeper fines. Gaisford responded that the fines are a civil penalty that apply to other civil infractions. McLoughlin added that King County and Seattle define flow control differently. Three of our partners operation regional systems outside our jurisdiction. For example, Seattle claims they can exercise flow control on all materials from the Recology MRF in Sodo. We believe, however, that a portion of the waste should return to us because it was generated in King County. We are at odds and our haulers are in the middle. Kelly added that there's discrepancy on whether a residual is defined as something that starts at the curb or is a product of the MRF processing.

Weiker added that her understanding is DTG can generate value from Republic Services' residuals in a way that Seattle and King County cannot. Happy to follow up offline by email.

Atwood asked for an update on the Ardaugh Glass recycling plant. McLoughlin responded he does not yet have an update. COVID-19 has likely bumped the issue as a priority, but he will investigate and report back next month. Kelly noted that we're fortunate to have glass recycling in our region as many parts of the US do not. It's a particularly important issue at this time because when a vaccine for COVID-19 comes out, it will be distributed through glass vials.

Atwood asked how we're going to begin the transition from a system beholden to separate jurisdictions to one that operates regionally. McLoughlin commented that it's a great point. We've seen great results from working together as region on the Recycle Right campaign. There's a financial implication to changing how our system operates. Starting next week, the solid waste managers from across the state will be engaging in 3 half day sessions to talk about common challenges, legislative needs, and possible solutions. These types of conversations are needed to remove some of the artificial barriers. One challenge is we don't all share the same aspirational goals. We're also working on creating a virtual version of the innovation tours canceled by COVID-19.

HazWaste Management Program

Joy Carpine-Cazzanti presented an update on the Haz Waste Management program:

Last year the program prevented over 3 million pounds of Haz Waste from entering the waste system and the environment. Many of the city staff know our Haz Waste program from collaborating on collection events and activities. In 2019 our collection events served more than 27,000 citizens. The events were going great, until COVID-19. Kent hosted a collection event in early March and June. All other collection events were cancelled or postponed.

In response to COVID-19, we coordinated with Public Health to keep our partners informed on the status of our operations, safety protocols and to provide communication tools. We created templates for posters, flyers, and updated our safer cleaning messaging. Our leadership approved placeholder funding of up to \$400,00 to allow our cities and tribal partners to use unspent 2020 dollars in 21-22. We also have collaborated closely with cities around social media posting and cross-promotion.

We're updating our management plan and taking the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to our vision, to ensure race is not a determinant of hazardous materials exposure in households and businesses in King County. We recognize that race currently is a determinant. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color are more at risk of exposure. We're incorporated greater and more frequent input from community groups in the update process. Our priority communities, those most likely to experience exposure, are being centered in the feedback process. We'll be working with Sound Cities Association (SCA) to connect with city and tribal staff and will keep you informed. We plan to transmit the plan to the Board of Health in December 2021.

Strader asked if any of the unspent funds in 2020 could help with relieve the rate increase. Gaisford responded that Haz Waste is funded separately and is not based on tonnage. The funds are collected by the King County Health Department and we're reimbursed for services we provide.

Trim asked when the committees will be able to review and provide comment on the plan update. Carpine-Cazzanti responded that in July 2021 the draft will be ready for review by the cities and formal partners.

MSWAC

Kassover reported that MSWAC followed the same agenda.

2021-22 Rate Development

Lindy Oliver Honaker presented the 2021-2022 Rate Development:

We've been doing our best to minimize the rate increase amount. Subsequent developments since the last meeting allowed us to change the proposal. We are now looking at no rate increase in 2021 and a likely 10% increase in 2022. We will forego the regional systems fee in 2021 and implement in 2022. Typically, we would balance the increase amount across the years but there is an acute need to minimize our increase in 2021. We're currently working on a rate restructure and plan to have it in place for 2023-2024. Last week we advised MSWAC on a new proposal of 3% and 4%. SWAC didn't even have a chance to see that.

In June King County released an additional economic forecast. Typically, these reports are only produced twice a year. The forecast resulted in a net positive change to the rate model. Additionally, the tonnage actuals at the end of June showed we're likely to outperform the medium impact scenario. We forecasted 768,000 tons for 2020 and, it's shaping up to be closer to 805,000 tons. We've also decided to lower the ending fund balance to about 3 million dollars. Finally, since last week a late breaking development resulted in a one-time increase in revenue.

Kassover asked for more details on the one-time revenue addition. Honaker answered that the one-time revenue was received from a settlement that infused 7 million into the rate. We were able to resolve a settlement that had to do with the calculation our natural gas revenue.

Kassover asked if the economic analysis considers that the most recent trends. Things were looking up in May and June, but that is no longer the case. Honaker answered that when the medium impact scenario was forecasted there was not a lot of information on how COVID would impact the economy. We predicted a sharp drop in tonnage. Since that time, we have a few data points from April and May that show we're only down a few percentage points from our original pre-COVID forecast. We would need to see 22% drops every month for the rest of the year to hit the medium impact scenario forecast, which is very unlikely. Our new forecast is better than the dire situation anticipated, but not necessarily a rosy tonnage forecast. Our rate model benefits from relief from inflation and lower bond amounts, indicators of a stressed economy. We're continuing to closely monitor the economic situation.

Recycle Right

Matt Manguso and Amanda Godwin from the Recycle Right Communications Consortium presented:

Godwin reported that a recent qualitative study of organics contamination conducted by C+C Consulting provides insight into the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors that influence curbside contamination. The study involved 14 in-home interviews with residents across the King County. Participants were asked to collect compost waste in a plastic bag and journal about their composting decisions prior to the interview.

The study identified 7 main reasons for contamination. One of the top reasons is residents received mixed messaging on how to compost that lead to flawed decision making. Residents want to do the right thing but are confused on what "compostable" means. The divergence between business composting and home composting also creates confusion, as did product labeling. Additionally, residents don't believe small mistakes

make a big difference, there's an "ick" factor around dirty containers, and household members have divergent understandings of best practices.

People largely believe composting is a good thing, but they aren't sure why. Most people think about materials according to which bin it belongs in, not whether something is compostable or not. Common deterrents to composting include the "ick" factor of spoiled food, hassle during inclement weather, and the extra time it takes to do the right thing. Bin labels and guides were not found to be effective for day-to-day sorting because people often don't use them for individual decisions.

High level recommendations from the study are being used to inform future compost campaigns. Study recommendations include leveraging the positive halo around composting, focusing on helping people make decisions about where a specific material goes, communicating one specific behaviors at a time, giving people permission to throw materials in the trash, and emphasizing the benefits of composting right.

Manguso provided background on the Recycle Right Consortium and reminded the committee that materials and templates from past recycling campaigns are still available on the online toolkit.

COVID-19 hindered the plastic bag takeback campaign and interrupted the Consortium's regular meetings. For now, the take back program is on hold. Instead, the Consortium turned its attention to launching a Compost Right campaign. The campaign will act as a partner to Recycle Right and aims to prevent contamination at home. The primary audience will be English and Spanish-speaking single-family households. Insights gathered from Cedar Grove, haulers and the C+C study show plastic is the largest contaminant. Messaging will center composting food scraps, keeping plastic out of the bin, following local guidelines, and throwing our questionable materials.

Currently, we're developing campaign assets, especially social media content. The aim is to make use of the channels that can reach people at home rather than large public displays on buses and billboards. We're developing radio ads for local broadcast and streaming services. Once templates are developed, we'll share them with you for your city to customize and promote.

Trim asked if the report could be sent out and how the participants were selected. Godwin responded the report is on the SWD website and a link will be sent out. The participants were selected through a research firm. They screened for environmental leanings and a variety in demographics and geographic locations. The screener included questions on disposal and only participants with some errors were selected for participation in the study.

Trim asked why the campaign isn't focusing on plastic produce stickers as they are a huge issue. Manguso responded that the consortium asked Cedar Grove which contaminants were the most problematic for their process. Plastic containers are more of an issue because they shatter while the stickers bundle together. We do have messaging around stickers on the SWD social media.

Trim asked if channels outside of Facebook and Google Ads will be used for promotion given the issues with these companies around cost effectiveness and ethics. Manguso answered that given Facebook's juggernaut status, the campaign will likely still rely on them for promotion, but ads won't be exclusive to Facebook. The issue can be brought up for discussion with the consortium.

Atwood asked if the MRFs have seen an increase in plastic bags and film since COVID. Kelly responded that they've been tracking plastic intake in response to the January bag ban. Anecdotally, there has been an increase since January.

Waste Characterization Study

Alexander Rist, Economist and SWD Project Manager presented:

Every 3-4 years, SWD commissions a waste characterization study to understand our waste stream. The latest study was conducted by Cascadia Consulting between March and December of 2019. The study found 56% of the waste collected came from residential households and 44% came from non-residential generators.

The study took 450 samples and divided the total waste into 105 unique products labels. Those products were categorized according to recyclability. 70% of our garbage was categorized as recyclable. Paper represents the biggest fraction of the materials. Food waste, wood and yard waste, and other organics are close behind. About 45% of the overall waste stream consists of organic materials. The top ten materials by weight represent almost half of the total waste stream. Significant progress towards zero waste of resources could be made by tackling those top ten materials.

Over time the waste characterization has changed dramatically. The report shows the changes between 2007-2019 by material group measured in tons. There were some declines in paper until 2019, a steady increase in plastics since 2011 and a decrease in food waste. The paper decline reflects the digitization of communication over the last decade. Some factors to consider is that the recession reduced disposal and banning C&D from our landfill decreased overall tons in 2019.

We'll provide a link to the online study. The report also includes customer profiles at each transfer station.

Dammann commented that the data demonstrates the massive problem with our waste stream and the potential in diverting organics waste.

Atwood commented that if one of the top ten materials by weight is plastic packaging and film, it must be a huge amount of product given how light the material is. Rist added that the amount of plastic has been trending upwards over time.

Member Comment

Trim invited anyone interested to participate in the Zero Waste Hack-a-Thon this Fall. The event will likely take place virtually. Participants, usually students, put together business proposals to tackle zero waste initiatives. Reach out if you want more info.

Waller reminded the committee that the chair and vice chair positions will be up for reelection in September. He'll be reaching out to our current chairs to see if there's interest in another term. Contact him if you're interested in one of the positions.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 11:28 am.

