

# **King County Solid Waste Advisory Committee**

**May 20, 2022 - 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

**Virtual Meeting (Zoom)**

## **Meeting Minutes**

<b><u>Members Present</u></b>	<b><u>King County Staff</u></b>
April Atwood, Marketing Industry	Eyasu Ayalew, Public Health Seattle/King County
Taylor Atkinson, Citizen Representative	Nori Catabay, SWD staff
James Borsum, Labor Representative	Pat McLaughlin, SWD Director
Logan Harvey, Recology	Amy Ockerlander, SWD staff
Phillippa Kassover, Local Elected Official	Yolanda Pon, Public Health Seattle/King County
Bill Louie, Citizen Representative	Andy Smith, SWD staff
Ken Marshall, Labor Representative	Isabelle Trujillo, SWD staff
Brian Martin, Citizen Representative	John Walsh, SWD staff
Stephen Schmidt, Citizen Representative	
Penny Sweet, Local Elected Official	
Heather Trim, Recycling Industry	
Wendy Weiker - Chair, Waste Industry	
<b><u>Guests</u></b>	
Phil Allen, non-member citizen	Kazia Mermel, Sound Cities Association
Brad Lovaas, Washington Refuse and Recycling Association	Tony Wright, King County Management Facility Director

## **Call to Order and Introductions**

Chair Weiker called the meeting to order with introductions at 9:32 a.m.

## **Agenda and Minutes**

Weiker moved to approve the April 2022 minutes and May 2022 agenda. The agenda and the meeting minutes were passed unanimously.

## **Public Comment**

Allen shared several comments regarding NERTS, specifically relating to the two May meetings that were put on by the County – the Public Open House and Information Session and the Siting Advisory Group meeting. During the Public Open House and Information Session, he heard McLaughlin say that the number one customer of the transfer station are the haulers. He wants to create a way that the County can easily receive numbers and data from the haulers regarding volume of trash picked up by area – maybe even asking the haulers to volunteer that information.

Allen thinks that these numbers could be crucial for negotiations and could be used by the Solid Waste Division to help decide a location for the new Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station.

## **SWD Updates**

McLaughlin provided the SWD update:

## **Ardagh Glass**

Tony Wright, Director of the King County Facilities Management Division oversaw the Ardagh glass lease renewal process. He provided an update on the agreement.

Ardagh Glass is the primary recycler of glass in King County. Part of their organizational footprint was leased from King County. We had concerns about the environmental impact of part of their operation as Ardagh is the top soot producer in the state and is in active litigation with the EPA.

As the lease came up for renewal, King County came up with the idea of placing convenience on the adjoining property for Ardagh to continue leasing King County's property. Part of the arrangement is Ardagh must shutdown or retool their furnace that produces the most pollution before they can renew their lease. We have negotiated a timeline for when the furnace/smelter must be replaced.

We believe this is a workable deal and both parties are satisfied. We offered the property to Ardagh at slightly below market. Ardagh believes they can remain economically viable under this arrangement and continue to process all the glass sent to them. This arrangement allows us to continue to meet demand with recycling glass locally.

The lease will be sent to the King County Council to approve the concept. Afterwards, it's sent back to us to sign and execute. We believe we have Council support, and we would welcome advisory group support

Trim agreed with the importance of having glass recycling here and of the benefits and asked if Wright could elaborate on the multiple smelters. Wright replied that there are three smelters - one is in very excellent condition with great soot control, the second will most likely not come back online, and the third is due for replacement (with a possible pending decision on if it needs to be shut down). He stated that there is an investment plan which will include jobs to help replace the furnace/smelters.

Trim followed up to ask about the timeline of the process. Wright responded that the process would start within 3.5 years and will take about 1.5 years to complete. This process will involve a lease that will need to go to County Council and after council has approved it, Wright will be able to sign it. He noted that the lease seems to have strong support.

### **Tonnage Report**

Our tonnage is up 3% for the year. We received roughly 2,700 tons less last month than in April 2021. Commercially collected tons recovered are up by 7% compared to April 2021.

### **Top load transfer station safety improvements**

Beginning May 2, 2022, vehicles measuring 25 feet or more will no longer be allowed at King County's Algona, Renton, and Houghton transfer stations. The only exception will be commercial hauling companies that have contracts to provide municipal waste pickup services.

New safety measures to protect customers and workers at these stations have reduced the length of the disposal stalls. Trucks and trailers over 25 feet no longer have enough room to safely maneuver inside the stations.

We're trying to accommodate customers who aren't aware of the change. Currently we have flyers, signage and messaging on our social channels and website alerting customers.

Customers with vehicles over the size limit will be diverted to the nearest stations and provided a voucher for a \$14 discount off their disposal fee at another King County Transfer Station (Bow Lake, Factoria, Enumclaw, and Shoreline).

### **Vashon solar project**

Starting on April 26, we began to install solar panels as part of a large-scale solar array at the Vashon TS to offset electrical use at the facility. The installation was funded in large part by a grant received from the State of Washington.

The system is expected to generate 172,000 kilowatt hours per year. Combined with energy efficiency efforts, including new roadway lights, a new heating system in the scale house and a new auto-shutdown feature for the giant trash compactor, the solar array is anticipated to generate as much electricity as is used by the station each year, making the station “net zero energy.”

We will be monitoring the energy performance over the next 12 months as part of our net zero certification. We can share out that data when available.

Atkinson asked if the solar panels are just for the transfer station, are all the vehicles electric, and is everything going back on the grid. McLaughlin responded that some of this energy will eventually end up back on the grid and that vehicle charging stations on site are a possibility. If the charging stations are added, they would be there primarily to support energy needs.

### **Republic Services**

There is a nationwide container shortage of rail cars and a staffing shortage at BNSF, which have hindered Republic's ability to transport Snohomish County municipal solid waste from Snohomish County Transfer Stations for final disposal. The buildup has negatively impacted public health, safety, and capacity at Snohomish County Transfer Stations. There were 600 to 800 containers stacked up and they had to close their transfer stations during the weekend.

All Snohomish County Solid Waste transfer stations and drop boxes will temporarily close on Saturday and Sunday, May 7-8 and May 14-15 in order to clear out excess refuse that has become a health, safety and environmental issue for customers and staff.

Republic Service reached out to us, and we agreed to help them on an interim basis. In order to maintain airspace at the King County landfill, we are doing a ton for ton exchange to Roosevelt landfill when the shortages have been resolved. We're taking an average of 15-20 loads from Snohomish each day. They anticipate this scenario will last at least a month until the labor issues are resolved.

This scenario is a good reminder of the importance of managing waste locally. Our system has proven to be reliable. We can support our own region's needs while assisting a neighboring county in distress.

Weiker wanted to give a thank you on behalf of Republic Services and Snohomish County for helping during the staffing shortage.

### **NERTS Community meetings**

Over 100 people attended our NERTS public open house and info session on May 12. We provided updates on the planning and siting process and answered audience questions. On May 19 we hosted hosting the NERTS Siting Advisory Group meeting. We expect to make decisions on which three sites will move forward to the EIS by the end of May.

Louie commented that he attended that Siting Advisory Group meeting and wanted to know how the County is going to move forward on the EIS. McLaughlin responded saying that the County will use the feedback and public comment received from the SAG meeting and the public open house session to make a decision. The technical evaluation of the possible sites and the Core Cities will also play a factor in the decision of sites moving forward.

### **Sound Cities landfill tour**

We've scheduled a tour of our landfill for Sound Cities Association members on May 23. This tour presents a unique opportunity for our division leadership to engage with elected officials and introduce them to our Re+ initiative, which advances regional environmental and financial stewardship goals.

Mermel commented that she is looking forward to the upcoming tour.

### **Bicycle recycling at transfer stations**

For years, we enjoyed a partnership with Bikeworks where bicycles and bicycle parts are collected at our transfer stations and transported to Bikeworks for them to repair, reuse, resell or recycle as part of a non-profit job skills program. Due to recent property vandalism and break-ins, Bikeworks has been forced to change and consolidate their program. They are no longer able to collect materials from King County transfer stations.

We have left the door open to Bikeworks should they decide collection makes sense for them to begin again. For now, bicycles and bicycle parts that come to our facilities will be recycled as scrap metal. SWD has researched to see if other organizations could be engaged to provide similar services as Bikeworks but as of now none have surfaced.

We're in the process of updating our website and signage to reflect these changes.

Kassover wanted to know if the Bikeworks agreement has already ended in King County. McLaughlin responded that he was unsure if it has happened yet but that it will happen very soon if it hasn't. Smith followed up with more information saying that Bikeworks has already stopped taking bikes from our system and that we are in the process of updating signage. We have done some research on alternatives and haven't found anything viable. He asked the committee to let the County know if there are any suggestions from the community.

### **Re+ Circular Economy Grants**

As a reminder, we are making \$1.8 million in funding available for local recycling, reuse and waste reduction projects through its Re+ Circular Economy Grant Program. The application period closed on May 6, we received a strong response and should have the grants in place by Mid-July. Since we are in the middle of the evaluation process, we can't divulge any details on the applicants, will announce the recipients once everything is finalized.

### **Flow Control**

We received indication from the City of Seattle about a potential settlement. This settlement will acknowledge flow control rights and address financial aspects of the tonnage. There is a meeting being set up which could potentially avoid mitigation. We're encouraged by our discussion on a possible solution. No details yet, but there are positive signs that this will be resolved outside the courts.

### **MSWAC Update**

The SWAC agenda mirrored the MSWAC meeting.

Sweet had nothing to add.

### **Other**

Kassover had several comments beginning with mentioning that she has tracked updates with SWD and Ardagh glass. Secondly, she wanted to know if virtual meetings will continue. Lastly, she mentioned that MSWAC approved the letter to go to the King County Council and said that they don't want the increase but understand why it's needed.

### **2023-2024 Rate Proposal Update – John Walsh**

Walsh provided the 2023-2024 Rate Proposal update:

We updated our rate model to reflect some late breaking changes, including a general wage increase of 4% per year and slightly increased central rates from the central risk management office. We also looked at debt instruments to lower the rates but decided to stick with standard debt terms. We're feeling confident that this latest version of our rate model at 9.6% will be the rate proposal put forward to the Executive.

Our increased rate is funding continued capital project investment, increasing recycling efforts, efforts to lower emissions including electric vehicles, and Equity and Social Justice Initiatives. At the request of the committees, we

looked at the impact of a no rate increase. A no increase now means sharper increases in future years: 13-17% per year. This would exhaust the Rate Stabilization Reserve by 2024.

We looked at what it would cost if we adjusted services for rate savings.

The [briefing document](#) we provided gives an overview of each of the four scenarios modeled if the rate remains the same in 2023. Those include:

- Reducing our operations at transfer stations to four days. This scenario is estimated to save SWD about \$3.3 million and likely consequences of this action include increases in traffic and wait times, impacts to hauler schedules leading to increased rates and reduced curbside services, and a reduction in SWD staff.
- Eliminating recycling services at our transfer stations is estimated to save \$4.45 million and result in increases in greenhouse gasses, lessen the life of the landfill, and potentially reduce SWD staffing.
- Eliminating city recycling grants is expected to save \$1 million and result in fewer recycling events as well as potentially harm relationships between the County and our partner cities.
- Slowing investment in the RE+ initiative is estimated to save \$3 million but would jeopardize reaching our regional environmental goals, delay waste diversion priorities, delay investment in green jobs and community outreach, and lead to increased greenhouse gas impacts.

Our timeline for transmitting the rate has slightly changed. The executive briefing was pushed to Wednesday, May 25 and then we will transmit legislation to the Executive. On June 16, legislation will be transmitted to council. The deadline to communicate rate changes is October 1.

Harvey asked what the transfer stations are going to accept, especially regarding composting (thinking about HB 1799). Walsh responded that the transfer station replacements to Algona and Houghton will take garbage, recycling and yard waste. Smith added in that there we will contracts with companies to haul compost.

Trim comments that she is putting together a group.

Walsh read aloud updates made to the committee's draft letter to Council in support of the 2023-2024 Solid Waste rate proposal and opened the floor for discussion.

Louie wondered if the SWAC needs to expressively support the concern for the rate raise. Weiker responded by asking if the SWAC is supportive or not opposed to the rate raise.

Members expressed support for sending the letter. Kassover stated that she is in favor of a letter that doesn't explicitly mention "support" but understands the need of the rate raise and what it means to the rate payer in the current economic times. Rather than explicitly saying the SWAC "supports" the rate raise, let the letter speak for itself.

Schmidt noted that he is in support but expressed concern that this rate raise is being driven by capital projects. He then asked what the estimate of construction is for getting Vashon online.

Martin thought that the data doesn't line up with the increase in the rate payer's bill – 79 cents isn't 10%. Walsh responded by saying that there are many situational combinations which make it hard to get that exact curbside impact number. To get the average number, SWD looked at the average tonnage of a family's curbside cart and looked at that increase. Walsh then asked if SWAC would like the letter to specify the 10%.

Harvey asked why not remove the percent increase in the letter. Walsh responded that the Council will want a number.

Weiker suggested that there be an addition to the disposal portion at the bottom of the letter to clarify that the rates aren't just King County. There is more to the bill increase such as the cost from the haulers.

Harvey suggested that the letter say that the SWAC is in support of the proposed improvement and add at the top that the SWAC supports and encourages the zero waste efforts.

Weiker moved to approve transmitting the letter as written to the King County Executive to be included in the package to King County Council. Atkinson seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

### **King County Equity & Social Justice**

Catabay spoke on the King County Equity & Social Justice Section.

To provide some background, Catabay started off explaining the Equity and Social Justice Ordinance of 2017 which acknowledges the role that King County has played in keeping racism alive. This ordinance begins the process of taking steps toward providing equal opportunity in several areas which are necessary for all people to thrive and achieve their full potential regardless of race, income or language spoken.

- Healthy built and natural environments
- Economic development
- Strong, vibrant neighborhoods
- Family wage jobs and training

In this process, King County has identified 14 Determinants of Equity which identify conditions that everyone needs to thrive.

In the King County, we Lead with race and have declared a public health crisis on racism because that's where the greatest needs exist. This is based on demographic and census information highlighting life expectancy by race and place and King County household income by race and place. In King County, Race and Place matter in predicting whether people have the best opportunities to thrive and there are quality of life indicators that represent this. By focusing "upstream" to address root causes and be pro-equity, there can be outcomes where individuals and families thrive regardless of race and place.

Catabay then explained the Community Agreements for the upcoming Small Group Breakouts. The guidelines were created so that people can feel safe and welcome and, in a place, where we can learn from each other and hear multiple viewpoints.

Martin commented that as an immigrant he very much knows what it's like to hit a ceiling that you can't go beyond because you aren't a full member of that community. He wanted to make sure other groups are focused on too. Catabay responded that even though the County is leading with race, the focus will be on all marginalized groups in the County.

10 minutes of Small Group Discussion and then the group reconvened.

Kassover shared a couple comments beginning with the history of the region and the impact of large organizations like King County. She followed up by commenting that affordable housing for underprivileged communities are things that large corporations and SWD can do to increase housing. The SWAC members would like to hear more about the lived experiences of People of Color and their interactions with large corporations and SWD.

Atkinson added that it's important to make sure that there are equal opportunities and that they are available.

### **Mid-Year Review 2022 Committee Workplan**

Ockerlander reviewed the current 2022 Committee Workplan and opened the floor for additional topic suggestions.

Atkinson asked if these are the items that SWD is working from and if this is the approved workplan for the SWAC. McLaughlin responded that these are the proposed items that we want the SWAC's advice from.

Weiker commented that she will provide a legislative update to the SWAC in August. She will try to go down to see JUNO in July/August and invited others to come along.

**Member Comments**

Kassover asked if we had plans for this committee to meet back in person. McLaughlin responded that it's up for discussion by the committee and that we can meet in person if we want, and King Street Center can be used as a meeting space. He also added that a hybrid approach works too and that SWD is prepared to support whatever direction the committee wants to take.

Atkinson commented that she saw something that said we'd have to meet in person at least once a quarter. McLaughlin responded that there have been some meeting changes that will provide some guidance and because SWAC is a public meeting, the meetings must be as accessible as possible.

Martin commented that he will not be able to continue as a member of the SWAC if the meetings are in person.

Atkinson believes that there will be more inclusion and accessibility if we continue to meet on Zoom but suggested perhaps an annual in-person meeting.

Schmidt commented that he doesn't think this committee is really comprised of the general public. He asked how we can leverage this group to propose ideas to the general public. And added that solid waste won't go away so we need to figure out how to discuss it with the public.

Weiker wanted to thank KCSWD for hosting the annual solid waste conference.

The meeting adjourned at 11:28.