

King County Solid Waste Advisory Committee
September 16, 2022 - 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Meeting Minutes

Members Present		King County Staff	
Taylor Atkinson, Vice Chair, Citizen Representative		Eyasu Ayalew (Public Health Seattle/King County)	
April Atwood, Marketing and Education		Mai Bui, SWD staff	
James Borsum, Labor Representative		Brian Halverson, SWD staff	
Karen Dawson, Manufacturer		Annie Kolb-Nelson, SWD staff	
Robin Freedman, Waste Management		Patty Liu, SWD staff	
Bill Louie, Citizen Representative		Pat McLaughlin, SWD Director	
Leah Tischler, Public Interest Group		Amy Ockerlander, SWD staff	
Heather Trim, Recycling Industry		Isabelle Trujillo, SWD staff	
Wendy Weiker, Chair, Waste Industry		Dorian Waller, SWD staff	
		John Walsh, SWD staff	
Guests			
Phil Allen, non-member citizen		Brad Lovaas, Washington Refuse and Recycling Association	
Lacie Adkins		Kazia Mermel, Sound Cities Association	
Jon Gire, Bellevue		Rob van Orsow, Federal Way	
Jeanette Jurgensen, Epicenter Services			

Call to Order and Introductions

After introductions, Chair Weiker called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m.

Agenda and Minutes

Freedman moved to approve the August meeting minutes. Atkinson seconded. Atwood moved to approve the August minutes. Borsum seconded. The meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Public Comment

Allen shared several comments related to the Re+ survey. He stated that he was excited to hear the results of the Re+ survey and took the survey himself. Some of the ideas presented and floated in the survey excited him and he sees a bright future ahead for waste if the majority of people who took the survey responded in a similar fashion to him.

Allen commented that he received a mailer and a text, so people are informed. He thought that we are missing information for people who never responded to the survey or who weren't asked and once again shared his excitement for the results if people answered the way he did.

SWD Updates

McLaughlin provided the SWD update.

Pilot of Dock Demolition

SWD is removing toxic creosote-coated pilings from the mouth of the Duwamish River which poses a threat to marine life and surrounding habit. When we bought this dock, it was already dilapidated, so we thought it was important to make an intentional effort to clean it and it has become a pretty beach. In addition to talking with KING 5 about the work and how this project helps sustains habitat gains made elsewhere in the Green Duwamish Watershed, our experts interviewed with the Seattle Times and new stories ran on the West Seattle Blog and KIRO 7.

We also produced a blog post and social media video.

Kolb-Nelson dropped in the chat the link to the Harbor Island press release and video:

<https://kingcounty.gov/depts/dnrp/newsroom/newsreleases/2022/August/18-Harbor-Island-Pilings.aspx>

BNSF Railways

As you know, King County has been receiving MSW from Republic from Snohomish County since April due to ongoing issues with BNSF Railways. As of yesterday, a tentative agreement has been reached with a delay of strike. And as 1/3 of commerce moves on train, we have some general continuity of operations that we need to account for.

We do have a heavy reliance on the waste system, and Republic services and King County have agreed to a tonnage swap until they can resolve their issues. We are continuing to watch this issue and manage operational and policy planning in terms of if we can expand our daily capacity on a loan basis and giving more than we can give. We don't have the means to just take the waste, so we have agreed on a temporary swap.

A rail strike could create a potential health and safety issue for MSW across the country, curbside (outside of King County) and would halt the movement of goods putting food supply at risk. We are continuing to keep a close eye on it.

“Food: Too Good to Waste” Campaign

25% of groceries end up back in the garbage and “Food Too Good to Waste” has been an active campaign to bring tools and awareness to better food planning to eliminate that waste. We've learned through a recent study by the Pew Research Center that 83% of Hispanics/Latinos report they are already taking active measures in their everyday lives to reduce food waste, which saves money and helps protect the environment. We wanted to really leverage that and partner alongside that and the Division offered practical tips in English and Spanish last month on preventing food waste and the costs associated with it as part of the “Food: Too Good to Waste” campaign.

SWD values these efforts and is helping Hispanic families continue minimizing food waste with tips, ranging from smarter grocery shopping to proper food storage.

Atkinson asked what they are going to do with all the trash and where will it go if the rail strike happens. McLaughlin replied that we've responded to requests before when trains can't get through and have served as a backup. At times, there have been as many as 400 rail cars that can't move out of the region, and this is the only year that we have received garbage. We have been approached by the City of Seattle and Snohomish County and we are working with Republic Services.

If it shuts down, it can become a public hazard and we want to do the right thing so we would try to expand our capacity. The local demand will probably expand our capacity and there are options to truck things to eastern or southern Washington but that is a lot of travel. We are facing labor constraints like truck drivers. These are all the more reason that when talk about Re+ and the ability to divert hundreds of thousands of tons, it will extend that local capacity even longer.

Trim had a question regarding Ardagh glass and wanted to know why there wasn't another community meeting. There was one in 2019 and then the community didn't hear anything more about. She thought that this posed an incredible challenge especially if we are trying to do equity work. McLaughlin responded that while he wasn't at this meeting and doesn't have much to share, King County Council has a lease renewal proposal, and this meeting was perhaps a second meeting on that proposal but is unsure. This committee had a briefing from the director of FMD.

Trim replied that this was a second meeting on an ordinance and apparently there had been a meeting in August. For background, this meeting was about the lease for Ardagh and renewing it for 10 more years. The updated lease states

that furnace #3 either has to be abandoned or closed by 2025. This is a challenging situation because there hasn't been communication to advocates and community members who are really concerned by the pollution of Ardagh and they might've been happy to hear about furnace #3, but there's still the open question of the other furnaces.

Weiker commented that this is about the glass facility and moving the glass along the recycling stream so there are two objectives. Trim added that there are three objectives because it is also about jobs.

Weiker added to the previous conversation on what would happen if there was a rail strike. She stated that only so many trucks can go out at a time and an option is to not have curbside collection but that's not sustainable for very long. There is a conversation on the local and state level to avoid the rail strike.

MSWAC Update

Sweet and Kassover were not present, so Ockerlander provided the MSWAC update.

Ockerlander said that the agenda was the same as SWAC and that there was a conversation about the Re+ pledge and letter. SWAC agreed to the Re+ support letter and provided some final edits.

Solid Waste 2023-24 Rate Proposal Update

Halverson presented the Solid Waste 2023-24 Rate Proposal Update.

King County Council met on Tuesday, Sept. 13 and voted and unanimously approved a rate proposal. It included a striking amendment which will delay the restructure implementation to 1/1/24. This will eliminate \$21.8 million Fixed Annual Charges (FAC) in 2023 and changes the basic fee from proposed \$135.64 to \$168.68. The FAC will still be implemented in 2024 and the neutrality of the 23' rate proposal will still be preserved. Either way, we are projecting to produce the same amount of revenue.

Waller provided some proposed rate restructure milestones to go into the cities rate restructure effort going into the next year. These milestones can be uniform or specific to each city. He will do regular check-ins with each city to ensure that they're on track with the actual process. Waller wanted to put this idea out there to help the process and is aware that things can quickly sneak up, and we want to be very intentional and specific going forward depending on each city's needs. This effort would include each city identifying 3-4 milestones regarding rate restructure efforts. The goal is to ensure successful contract negotiations. We understand the time it took to get there, and we don't run into this time issue again, so he will start engaging cities and haulers on a timeline.

Re+ Survey Results

Kolb-Nelson presented the Re+ Survey Results.

We are gearing up to do a public launch for this zero-waste effort and many people aren't aware that 70% of what ends up the landfill could be reused or recycled. To help inform our strategic communication planning around Re+ and to get a better understanding of people's feelings and knowledge of Re+, we hired professional polling firm EMC Research to conduct market research services, including one statistically accurate poll, two focus groups, and 20 individual interviews.

This poll focused on 1,000 residents in the King County service area, including unincorporated King County. The methodology used was Address Based Sampling (ABS), which randomly targeted participants with valid mailing addresses through a post card, which had a unique code to be used by a single household member. The verbiage on the post card was very general by design to avoid people opting out by specifically referring to composting or recycling and having people say, "I don't do that" and not take the survey. The survey was offered online and by phone in English, Chinese, Spanish and Vietnamese.

The survey was conducted earlier this summer of the 1000 residents who were polled, and the results had a margin of error of 3.1%.

At the initial outset of the poll, we read a general statement of Re+ and majority of people were generally supportive, but there were still a fair number of folks who either didn't know about it or didn't care about it.

The researchers then drilled down more into the specifics, starting with asking people if they agreed with the following statements. There's solid support for all, though the first three or four have the highest level of intensity. At least 2/3 agreed with all of these Re+ program statements.

A lot of people find the rules around recycling really confusing and that's what we are trying to change with the recycling consortium.

We then got into Re+ early action program components and this slide describes what these actions entailed, and the level of support people gave each one. This is shown graphically on the following slide. Mixed waste processing and EPR may be the most supported parts of the Re+ program, but all program components resonate strongly and widely with King County residents.

These showed really strong support and we are seeing that these components resonate strongly with residents. After giving more detail about Re+, the support response went up to nearly 90% (from 63% to 88%) which shows that this is really where people want to go. Now the question is how we get there. This research gives us the basis to start that conversation and build public awareness in terms of how these actions carry on.

In addition to the polling, we also conducted two focus groups in late August, and we just got the results back yesterday late afternoon. The two focus groups comprised of diverse people in the community to get a better read on how people are thinking about it and some of their concerns that aren't captured in the polling. A high-level report from the focus groups were that people were really supportive, but people were skeptical on if these goals are attainable. People weren't really able to connect the Re+ actions with climate change and climate mitigation so this is an opportunity to provide education to people. We also found that people want to relate to more simple terms because the jargon was really off putting.

We are finalizing a list of partners we want to get their opinions on for the individual interviews and those will be coming in the next few weeks. The Re+ launch is tentatively set for end of November and the launch is just the beginning of these efforts to educate people in this huge shift in waste management and resource recovery.

Trim commented that this is awesome and that these are great results. She asked if the committee could get a copy of these results and wanted clarity on if this was a report. Kolb-Nelson responded that this is a report out by EMC, and we are happy to get these results out to the committee.

Trim followed up by asking if Kolb Nelson said there were 1,000 respondents. Kolb-Nelson replied that there were 1,000 respondents for the poll.

Weiker asked how SWD is coordinating with the King County Collaborative and how the efforts are coming together. Kolb-Nelson responded that we are very coordinated with them, and the Executive has put a lot of emphasis on climate change. Our public affairs team is in contact with Rachel Brombaugh and those in the Executive Office are engaged in climate change.

Re+ Pledge and Letter

Ockerlander presented on the Re+ Pledge and Letter.

Ockerlander hoped to get the buy off from this group in order to send this to the Executive and King County Council. The support letter is in recognition that many people in this group can't sign a pledge, and this says that you support the letter.

Louie commented that he noticed a line that is different in the pledge and the letter. Ockerlander responded that that line has received some discussion and MSWAC approved the letter with the caveat that the line would be changed. But ultimately, both letters will have the same language.

Atwood suggested that we connect the dots between the circular economy and resource conservation, and the direction of material away from the landfill. She also commented on paragraph four and stated her unsureness with how much the council members might know about Re+ and suggested talking about the key early actions that we know, and then talk about Re+ actions of developing a community panel to help guide future outcomes. We already have clear goals so it would be great to say that and say that we will be working on them.

Ockerlander said that the community panel has been meeting for a couple months and they are now providing feedback which will be incorporated in the plan to Patty Liu, the program manager.

Louie mentioned to approve the letter. Tischler seconded. Weiker and Atkinson will work together on the feedback and then approve and finalize it.

Weiker expressed her thanks to the committee for this important work and the important work that comes with it.

Ockerlander transitioned the conversation to the Re+ pledge.

This is the pledge that will go out to cities and start the baseline for that real collaboration that will be necessary for this program to be successful. Having cities in line will be critical to making sure this program is successful.

Trim commented that Re+ is a plan and saying what it is without explaining it is a little jargony. There is a noun that is missing in what Re+ is. It states that it is an effort, but it is actually a plan. Ockerlander replied that there will be background knowledge that will accompany the program.

Trim followed up by stating that it should say that it's a multiyear program and then put Re+ in parenthesis. Atkinson agreed and said that in the first sentence in the second paragraph, add the word "compostable." So, it would say, "compostable, reusable or recyclable."

Weiker added that this will help with diversion and climate action. The whole point of this is climate action and the actions that can go with it, and cities can do all that programmatic work that the County is kind of guiding. As long it's consistent with the letter and that zero-waste goal, we can see what the cities have to say.

Proposed future presentations

Waller led the discussion on proposed future presentations. There were several topics that were explored for future conversations in a past meeting and since we are in the early stages of 2023 work plan, Waller created a poll with two topics that he believes could generate a lot of interest. Staff will still have to develop the content, but Waller wanted to see if MSWAC wanted to explore either of the topics later this year or early next year.

Waller pulled up a poll asking:

1. What topic would you prefer?
 - a. Global, national, and state level approaches to solid waste practices
 - b. Overview of Landfill closure and future planning

Atkinson asked about how these topics were different. Waller responded that he wasn't in the meeting so was unsure but knows that they are two very different topics. The second one refers to the future planning of closing of the landfill.

Atkinson followed up by saying that she brought up the global part of the question because she was curious to see what other countries were doing. Weiker added that she offered the railway because Republic is one of two to companies that do railway in the area. She asked if there were several long-term disposal options coming.

Walsh responded that a couple months ago we started to talk about the comp plan update and are now about to sign with a consultant to look at several different long-term disposal options including waste export, waste to energy, pyrolysis, gasification, and Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) (which creates pellets that can be burned to create electricity or serve as a replacement for fossil fuels). The consultant will come in and talk about the pros and cons of each option, and how it stacks up along the financial, environmental and equity frameworks. This will all happen over the next eight months and will be in a lot of meetings next year.

Waller said that the second topic is a general overview of the landfill closure process and what that would entail. He believes this is a topic that could be of great interest to a lot of SWAC members.

Trim commented that a tour would be great to add to the list. Weiker said that we want to see the landfill, a transfer station and then Cedar Grove. Trim followed up by asking if all the ideas are in a list so that SWAC can see.

Weiker called on McLaughlin to talk about some of the topics.

McLaughlin stated there is always an interest in disposal options, like what we are going to do when Cedar Hills closes. One option is a review of alternative disposal options. In dialogue with MSWAC last week, when we talk about the global and national handling of solid waste elsewhere, seeing how they do it so differently and why. For example, why Florida uses waste to energy.

As McLaughlin flushed out the ideas more and saw what it meant to him and what it meant to MSWAC, he saw it as understanding the sequencing for our existing landfill and then seeing at what point do we need to decide to have some sort of disposal solution. This would include the timing and key decisions that will need to be made over the coming years. Like these Re+ tours that didn't get off the ground. We did virtualize them, but it's time to get back on a bus and go see some of these incredible facilities like Cedar Grove and even some outside of the region.

Weiker asked Walsh about the timeframe and maybe it can be brought up at a coming meeting, so folks know.

Atkinson was curious about how the rest of the world recycles or composts, and how they handle their waste stream. Weiker suggested that we find someone to speak about that as a show and tell item. She then asked the group if there were any other ideas starting to compile. She was thinking about what is coming up in the legislative session and this group should see any work that the County is doing that is related to this charter's body of work. Weiker suggested the idea of hearing more about Ardagh.

Trim wanted to know what in-markets we have coming out of King County and what the barriers are for getting more markets. She added that all of these should be laid in environmental justice. McLaughlin replied that we need to know what SWAC wants to know first. These presentations don't exist necessarily, and we want to prioritize our work.

Atkinson asked how the City of Burien is doing since they have said that take out containers must be compostable and wanted to know how that transition was going. She wanted to know how they are enforcing it, how many businesses are on board, and any other cities that have made similar transitions and their feedback.

Weiker commented that we are not the only folks working on this. We can track what the Washington State Recycling Committee is doing and see if there's already available resources and reading lists. In terms of priorities, long range

disposal should be one because that is a serious action item that needs to be delivered and other priorities are more education related. Let us figure out how to prioritize that and then come back to this group and get approval from SWAC.

Trim asked if a survey could be sent out on the topics. Waller responded that these will also be incorporated into the 2023 work plan.

Weiker asked the group if there is an interest in having field trip Fridays. Trim wanted clarification on if that meant going to the site physically. Weiker replied yes because it's time to get on the ground and see the work going forward.

Trim asked if the meetings could be post lunch. Weiker responded that we could do post lunch and a couple Fridays here and there. She suggested a couple times in the October/November timeframe and doing Cedar Hills and Cedar Grove together.

Waller said that he will have to plan a tour and we could do one this year, but it will take some planning.

Dawson commented that this was her last day on SWAC, but she will be the person to coordinate with at Cedar Grove regarding these tours.

Weiker said that we will take the scheduling offline and find some dates. Dawson added that we might want to look at keeping materials local, like composting. Unless we want to travel to see things, we should keep things local.

Mclaughlin thanked Dawson for her years of service on the committee and her passion and approach to these issues. We appreciate Cedar Grove as a partner and appreciate having you as the point person and challenging us importantly over the years. It's been great to have Dawson as an individual on this committee and we are very grateful.

Weiker also thanked Dawson for all that she's done.

Member Comments

Weiker stated that we will come back with a list of topics and schedule for next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 10:49 AM.