

City and Borough of Sitka
Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC)
Meeting Minutes
August 28, 2014 – Centennial Hall – Rousseau Room

Meeting Convened at 6:30 p.m.

Advisory Board Members Present:

Michelle Putz, Climate Action Plan
Dorik Mechau, Island Institute
Scott Brylinsky, Public Participant
Phil Mooney, Bear Committee
Don Anderson, Pacific Waste
Andrew Thoms, Sitka Conservation Society
Mike Litman, Public Participant
Leah Mason, Public Participant
Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Chair
Richard Parmelee, Planning Committee

Staff:

Michael Harmon, City and Borough of Sitka
Mark Gorman, City and Borough of Sitka
Jay Sweeney, City and Borough of Sitka
Chaix Johnson, City and Borough of Sitka

Others:

Jeff Riley
Megan Pasternak
Marie Murray
Kevin Knox
Sarah Komisar

Michael Harmon started the meeting by giving a status update to the Committee. The firm of Chicago Bridge & Iron (CB&I) has been dismissed from the project. The staff of CBS are working with Alaska Pacific (APES) to resolve the issue of waste in Sitka. The rate payers and SWAC group have decided to find a cost-neutral resolution, making things such as composting and bear cans issues we cannot deal with right now as they will cost money. The task of making the existing system more efficient and looking for opportunities to save money with curbside recycling is what the SWAC, APES, and CBS will focus on. CB&I made a recommendation and compiled all the data into a report, of which the SWAC members have been given copies.

Harmon would like to start out with some financial background and Jay Sweeney has done a baseline rate analysis of where we are at today; if we continue to operate how our system

operates today, also, if something changes or is added, how this impacts the baseline. The baseline shows an increase is needed, and this is before anything is added or changed, such as curbside recycling.

1. Financial background

Jay Sweeney discussed the financial background for the solid waste program. This entire program is now entirely performed by contract. If contractual costs rise they must be paid, there is no way the CBS can gain efficiencies internally. The contracted operations include waste hauling, operation of transfer station, and operation of landfill and recycling centers. For the trailing 12 months, this utility has broken even, and nothing new has been added. Sweeney reported there will be rising costs in the future, however. If the program wants to have enough money in the fund, available to pay for all needed infrastructure in the future, then the fund does not have the amount of money it should have. The fund should have \$800,000 in it to fund future, needed infrastructure.

The methodology Sweeney used was to identify through the year 2035 the needed infrastructure and this is in terms of repairs, replacements, closures, and renovations. The years these items will need to be accomplished have also been identified. During the year 2023, Sweeney says the fund will run totally out of money following the current plan. The current day-to-day operations for the program \$75,000, and the assumptions are that cost would increase at 2% annually. Other assumptions are that the user base will remain steady and cash inflows will remain steady. APES has now taken over the entire program and there will be a 50/50 split of revenues for 6 months and then the contract will be renegotiated.

Sweeney's presentation showed the next ten-years' schedule of large purchases needed for the program. Putz was curious why the biosolids program needs to be funded by the solid waste program, and Sweeney explained that water department pays the solid waste division to dump at the landfill. The landfill falls under the realm of the solid waste division.

Harmon notes that these items may or may not be needed depending upon whether curbside commingle is chosen. The current shear baler crushes the approximately 300 cars taken to the landfill per year. It is not very efficient, as the containers that go out do not get charged by how full they are, but by how much they weigh. Currently the shear baler can only crush the cars small enough to fit 13 tons in a container when 23 tons can fit with a better shear baler. Replacing the shear baler would be very cost effective. Petersburg and Craig are also looking to purchase the same shear baler we would like to purchase. The shear baler and tub grinder purchases will be discussed at another meeting after the SWAC has more information.

For an isolated, island community such as Sitka, it is important to be able to get the scrapped vehicles off the island, as there is no room to store them indefinitely, and if there is nowhere to turn in junked vehicles, they will be left in peoples yards or dumped in State or City areas, which becomes a public nuisance. Another option that is not feasible is to create income by taking cars from other communities and then baling them and shipping off island. There is no room

for the storage and if we start taking vehicles from other communities, Sitka will run out of room very quickly. If a new shear baler is purchased, it will belong to the City, not the contractor, who will simply be hired to operate it.

Sweeney's research shows that the program needs an increase of 3% each year to fund each of these purchases to have the solid waste fund run effectively. With this yearly 3% increase, the program will make up roughly \$200,000 of deficit that will be needed for infrastructure repairs and equipment purchases.

Harmon notes there are five different rate classes; residential, commercial, etcetera and they should be self-sustaining and not subsidize the other. Currently the residential 90-gallon can rate class currently subsidizes all of the other programs. The commercial program receives the largest subsidy. Harmon would like to make it a goal of this committee that each rate class is self-sustaining and does not subsidize the other.

The current 10-year plan is not set in concrete and can be changed and amended depending upon what this committee changes with regards to the future of solid waste program.

It is noted that the 90-gallon can is more expensive to use than a smaller can, and this is almost used as a penalty for having a lot of garbage. People who choose smaller cans and take their recyclables to the recycle center receive a better rate as they are reducing the amount to be shipped off island to the landfills down south. Committee members Putz and Litman would like to see a cost breakdown of each program and whether it is self-sufficient or needs to be subsidized.

2. CB&I Final Report

Harmon then discussed the CB&I final report. CB&I compiled all the surveys, captured the two meetings, and what the goals were at the beginning of this process. The data in the report shows what we collect, how much it costs, what money we get for each commodity, and how the existing system performs. The final recommendations were that all trash has to be hauled off island, and finding a cost-neutral recycling program that will not increase the rates.

3. Commingled curbside recycling

Michael Harmon states it appears that curbside recycling is the only real cost-neutral program that will not increase rates. There will be additional cost up front, but also additional revenues. Sweeney can run scenarios with assumptions at the request of the Committee. Garbage disposal programs would be a good cost-neutral program for users to run food waste into the wastewater treatment facility and not in the trash system. Currently our system is a recycle center where residents sort their own recycling. The recycling is worth more to the end users as it is already sorted. Commingled recycling lowers the value, as the end user still has to sort it. The current recycling system at the recycle center is not fault proof as some people are still throwing garbage in the bins – contaminating whole loads.

Two options for curbside recycle, according to Harmon, are:

- a. For the haulers to alternate pick-ups; trash one week and recycling the next week. The down side to this option is that trash gets more putrescent and could be a bear concern.
- b. The other option is to have trash pick-up every week while the recycle gets picked up every other week. The down side to this option is that more trucks need to be added to the fleet as two separate cycles will be running concurrently.

Because the value of commingle is less than the value of single recyclables, we would have to take in much more commingle. Currently we do 600 tons of separated recycling; to make the same amount of income, a comingled quantity of 6,000 or 7,000 tons to be equivalent.

Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Chair, comments

- Cities with mature recycling programs it is estimated the diversion rate is 70-75%.
- Policing and education for contamination needs to be discussed.
- With curbside recycling, diversion rates go up because more people recycle.
- Kreiss-Tomkins would like Jay Sweeney to provide cost estimates for both curbside pick up and commingle drop off.

Scott Brylinsky comments

- Comparisons for cost for options such as alternating weeks is important
- Neighborhood cans with people sharing recycle bins could help.

Jay Sweeney reminded the SWAC group that the currently recycling facility is nearly maxed out and with the extra volume that would come with curbside commingle pick up changes to the facility will have to be made.

Michelle Putz comments

- Recycling should be mandatory
- Enforcement issues need to be discussed.
- Commingle recycling has many environmental impacts, more than financial impacts.
- Can commingle be sorted here to be sold for more profit?

Andrew Thoms comments

- Costs can be kept down using education
- Garbage disposals can be used to take food waste out of the solid waste stream
- Smaller tubs can be used at the recycle center

Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins addressed concerns about satellite recycle areas around the City. He notes the City has tried this and found there was not a lot of demand or use. There were scattered collection areas, a glass collection area in one location, and cardboard collection in another. Michelle Putz noted this is probably not a good approach and would like to see a satellite collection area with everything not just one or two commodities. Community or neighborhood recycling cans were brought up, and Jeff Riley notes that when this is forced on

neighborhoods some people will abuse it and contaminate the commingle containers. Leah Mason would like to see more education, perhaps in schools.

Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins believes the two options he sees are to use the current assets we have or create another system, such as Petersburg has done, and have two pick-ups. The numbers need to be looked at for both options. Don Anderson notes there is limited space available and there is only enough room now for existing services. A larger building and larger facilities would be necessary with commingle pick up.

Scott Brylinsky made a motion to ask Michael Harmon to get the numbers showing two scenarios: Scenario One is for alternate week collections (commingle one week/MSW the next), and Scenario Two is to have two pickups a week (commingle/MSW) for each household.

Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins seconded the motion.

There was no opposition to the motion, motion passed.

Jeff Riley had several ideas for money and efficiency savings

- Education is very important
- Change the free 200 pounds at the landfill.
- Grinding food waste and not throwing it away.

4. Schedule for next meeting

- a. Scheduled for November 13, 2014.

OTHER ITEMS

- City staff will send copies of any pertinent information to the SWAC committee before the meeting, including an agenda and relevant backup. City staff will also make contact with the members of the committee a week ahead of the meeting as well as a reminder the day of the meeting.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Further discussion of shear baler and tub grinder
- Glass: disposal/reuse (Leah Mason)
- Committee members Putz and Litman would like to see a cost breakdown of each solid waste program and whether it is self-sufficient or needs to be subsidized.
- Additional Recycle center, or sharing cans in neighborhoods (Michelle Putz)
- Michael Harmon's information on two scenarios
- If curbside recycling is a reality, is it mandatory for all users?

Adjourn 9:15 p.m.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

November 13, 2014