

**City and Borough of Sitka  
Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC)**

Meeting Minutes

March 12, 2014 – Centennial Hall

Meeting Convened at 6:00 p.m.

**Advisory Board Members Present:**

Michelle Putz, Climate Action Plan  
Dorik Mechau, Island Institute  
Scott Brylinsky, Public Participant  
Phil Mooney, Bear Committee  
Steve Eisenbeisz, Downtown Business  
Don Anderson, Pacific Waste  
Andrew Thoms, Sitka Conservation Society

**Staff and Consultants:**

Gary Baugher, City and Borough of Sitka  
Michael Harmon, City and Borough of Sitka  
Mark Gorman, City and Borough of Sitka  
Chaix Johnson, City and Borough of Sitka  
Phil Kowalski, CB&I (Chicago Bridge & Iron)  
Richard Hertzberg, CB&I

**Others:**

Larry Trani  
Hugh Bevan  
Mike Litman  
Megan Pasternak  
Robert Jacobs  
Carole Gibb  
Ken Corson  
Kerry MacLane

Michael Harmon, Public Works Director, called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m. Harmon gave a brief introduction of the meeting and why the Solid Waste Advisory Committee is needed. The contract for shipping trash off the island will be up in 2015, and the City wants to be prepared and ready for that and to change the direction according to what the community would like. He noted how important it is that the citizens of Sitka give their ideas for solid waste changes or additions that are different from the current contract.

Gary Baugher, Maintenance and Operations Superintendent, is the Project Manager for this project and he introduced Phil Kowalski and Richard Hertzberg of CB&I.

Kowalski invited the committee members to introduce themselves (detailed below) and then members of the public were invited to introduce themselves and to say why they are interested in this topic.

**Members of the Public**

Larry Trani: Sitka resident

Mike Litman: Has a welding shop that generates a lot of metal scrap and was on the previous committee

Carole Gibb: Sitka resident with the Maritime Heritage Society. Interested in recycling.

Megan Pasternak: Worked with an ad hoc recycling group here in Sitka when it was feared the recycling program would not last.

Hugh Bevan: Sitka resident

Robert Jacobs: Pacific Waste

Ken Corson: Sitka resident, also on ad hoc recycling committee

Kowalski then gave some background as to why CB&I has been hired to help the CBS formulate a new Solid Waste Plan and described their process. He would like to see this process be collaborative, the last time a municipal waste plan was drafted it was a collaborative effort and CB&I would like to continue that process. The prior plan was developed in the 1990s with considerable public input and one of the recommendations that came out of that planning process was that rather than wait for the end of the period or a crisis to develop, the plan should be updated periodically. The service contract, collection agreement and transport, and disposal agreement will come up in early 2015 and now is a good time to look at overall strategies and desires of the community. There is community interest in recycling opportunities and composting and it is a good time to look at different options and evaluate them to incorporate them into a comprehensive system. Bear systems are another issue in our community and will be addressed. Solid waste is funded as an enterprise fund and is meant to be self-sustaining and the rates have been stable for 10 years. Rate and cost models will be created to assure that this program can be maintained as an independent enterprise fund going forward; prices and future desired services will be added into the rates to evaluate what the impact will be.

The outcome of this master plan will address long-term strategic issues and creating a new master plan will be done in a thorough, logical manner that looks at the existing system and any future potential options. There are a number of objectives behind the plan. Some are economic related such as controlling the rates, providing sufficient revenue to maintain existing infrastructure and programs. There are also environmentally related objectives such as increasing recycling or composting. The Climate Action Group considered a number of solid waste options as a part of their study and there are sustainability aspects to the Solid Waste Management Plan. Service and reliability are important as this is a service that residents rely on a weekly basis. Tradeoffs have to be made and different factors have to be weighed in

regards to this plan so at the end the plan is practical, implementable, reflects the desires of this community, and is sustainable.

The plan will be created in three phases. The first phase is the **objective phase**. The objective phase is when priorities and goals are set and the existing system is reviewed. The existing system works currently but there may be opportunities for enhancements. The second phase is **analyzing options and alternatives**; these options will address composting, diversion opportunities as well as disposal opportunities. The third phase is when CB&I will **develop recommendations** and create a final Solid Waste Master Plan report.

The objective that the city had was to obtain broad representation in a committee; with representatives from the city, the assembly, the solid waste industry, environmental groups, business groups, some of the existing committees such as the Bear Committee, tribal representation as well as public representatives; this type of group should provide a balanced review. There will be a series of meetings with this Advisory Committee with CB&I providing background and factual information in the form of a Power Point. The information will be ready and given to the committee a few days before the meeting for review. Each meeting is open to the public and following each meeting there will be an opportunity for the public to ask questions or make comments. A resident survey will be created to provide valuable input to the overall effort, and assess current satisfaction. The survey will also help to define whether residents know about current recycling opportunities and locations. All materials from the meetings will be posted on the internet for the public to see and be able to chart the progress of the plan.

The plan will optimize the use of existing facilities and programs. The committee will look at costs to maintain and move forward with the goal of controlling rates to the users. Disposal options will be looked at, which may include renewal of agreement with Republic Services for shipment of the waste to their landfill in Washington State or other alternatives. There is interest in curbside recycling as well as what the implications to the current drop off center and transfer station for processing that material. There is interest in composting and that will be discussed by the committee. Subsidiary issues such as construction and demolition debris, rate incentives for recycling, bear issues, and promotion and education will be discussed as well.

The first phase will consist of initial system assessment with initial meetings. The resident survey will be implemented in April to provide useful information for the committee and the development of the solid waste plan. The next meeting will be at the end of May and more factual information will be given for the cost of the current system and discussions of current system and begin discussions of alternatives and options as well as service enhancement. The second phase will be in June and July; this is when the alternatives will be discussed. The third phase will be trying to take the input of the committee and the public and develop a set of recommendations for the final plan.

Kowalski gave a brief history of his credentials. He has been involved in solid waste for over 25 years and Hertzberg a few more years than that. They have written solid waste master plans in the Pacific Northwest and throughout the country. His firm has experience in designing facilities such as landfills, transfer stations, and recycling facilities and bring knowledge of infrastructure to the project. Bob Wallace is also on the project but not present developed many of the initial long haul transport and disposal methods in the Pacific Northwest when they were first initiated in the 1990s. Chris Bell who is also on the project but not present is the financial expert will be working on setting the rate structure.

Kowalski then introduced Dorik Mechau. Mr. Mechau previously worked on the development of a solid waste planning document titled, "Long Term Waste Management Strategies for Sitka; a Consensus through Collaboration," approved by the Assembly in August, 2001. This was followed by the formation and activity of an ad hoc group known as the Solid Waste Implementation Team, or SWIT. SWIT functioned for close to three years to promote Assembly and staff action on priorities identified in this original plan. Mechau notes that the interesting aspect about solid waste is that there is nobody in town who can claim to be outside of the issues of solid waste as we all contribute to the solid waste stream. After the mill closed in the 1990s, the community was divided on many issues and problems with solid waste were growing. The landfill was at, or beyond capacity and the State of Alaska was threatening to shut it down. The incinerator plant that had always been a divisive solution or partial solution to dealing with solid waste had failed and its lifetime had run out. There were many views in the community and was an emotional topic that was hard to get thorough information on all the facets of solid waste.

The Island Institute worked with community division and the issues that faced the community post the pulp mill shut down. There was a collaborative process that was proposed by an Assembly-sanctioned long-range planning commission. The commission proposed to the assembly a process driven by a community group. That collaborative process got underway over a period of about a year and a half. The group initially met to discuss how to work together on divisive issues, not about solid waste per say but when the workshops were concluded, the decision was reached to move ahead on solid waste because it was considered to be a paramount, pressing issue. In 2001, SWIT worked for two years put pressure on the assembly to advance the items recommended on the proposal – long term waste management strategies for Sitka. It was also felt that succeeding assemblies would need to look at those proposals and adjust them for changes in the environment and technology. Mechau reminds this committee that the value of the original document and the recommendations has to do with the process and the legitimacy and power of a true collaboration.

Committee members then introduced themselves and gave their thoughts of current services and what they see as needs for the future.

Scott Brylinsky worked for CBS during the time the first plan was drafted.

- Stragier's service has been exemplary.

- Believes there is a lot of interest in recycling.
- Biosolids landfill at Granite Creek is filling fast and alternatives need to be discussed. Biosolids are the solids retrieved at the end of the wastewater process. These solids are periodically trucked to a landfill in the Granite Creek valley. This landfill operates under a DEC (Department of Environmental Conservation) permit. It is estimated that the landfill will be filled to capacity in approximately 6 years.
- Clean or inert waste can be dumped at Granite Creek – people do not know about it
- Hazardous waste landfill at Granite Creek is very large. The landfill accepts asbestos and contaminated soil but does not accept regulated hazardous waste.
- Would like to look into biofuel opportunities with waste (cardboard and pallets). Sitka has access to a machine that can turn cardboard into bricks.
- Would like to see about opportunities for turning fish waste into biofuel.
- Would like to see more or changes in the fluorescent & CFL (compact fluorescent light) recycling and collection.

Don Anderson, Pacific Waste (Stragier Sanitation)

- The transfer station needs upgrades, the facility is old and needs some maintenance.
- The scrap yard facility is old and small and needs maintenance.
- If the committee would like to see more recycling and reuse, a centralized area for sorting and dropping off all recyclables would be the best option. The reuse center currently used is so far out the road many people do not know it is there.
- The trucks currently used are older (15+ years) and will need to be upgraded in the near future. Anderson will give CB&I an estimate for purchasing new trucks.

Andrew Thoms

- Service and reliability from Stragier is terrific.
- Would like to see recycling services expanded and enhanced.
- Would like to see where the recycling stream goes and what the commodity markets look like. Would also like to see new areas to recycle, new commodity markets. Is also interested in what the end result is of the recycling – what is made from the materials recycled.
- Would like to see the waste stream used locally without shipping off island – such as biofuels and composting.
- Incentivize for recycling so there is less shipping off island, remember that per our contract we have to ship a certain amount of material off the island.
- Would like to see case studies of other communities like ours such as Kodiak, Petersburg, and Juneau.
- Would like to see shipping costs for getting trash and recyclables off the island, and where costs are trending.

Michelle Putz, former Assembly member and member of the Climate Action Plan.

- Would like to see more ways to divert trash by centrally locating a reuse/recycle facility.

- Would like to see Sitka working with other communities regionally if there is a need.
- Service and reliability from Stragier is great.
- According to the Community Action Plan, they would like to see curbside recycling, materials reuse center, municipal composting, banning yard waste from garbage pickup, and more enforcement.
- Would like to see trash cans marked with identification markers.
- Wants to see what other communities are doing.
- When the survey is done, would like to see the responses, and wonders how surveys will be given so the results are not skewed.
- Is interested in more reuse and green waste recycling.
- Would like to see more of Sitka's waste be used, or reused for business opportunities such as using fish waste for food, supplements, or energy, plastics into electricity etc.

Stephen Eisenbeisz, Sitka business member

- Is curious how the survey will be given out and received by the City (per Kowalski, it will be a web-based survey with paper copies available at several locations).
- Wonders what the term of the plan will be (per Kowalski, it will be approximately 20 years).
- Would like to see curbside recycling be mandatory for all residents, and wonders how curbside recycling will affect businesses.
- Wonders about green funds or grants for expanding the City's recycling center.
- Would like to see an option for downtown businesses to combine garbage cans to save time, money, and space.
- Would like to see cardboard turned into biofuel as downtown businesses have massive amounts of cardboard.

Phil Mooney, Bear Committee. Mooney is the area biologist with the Fish and Game and wants the committee to know that the bears are not the problem, the humans are. Education about attracting bears is very important

- Would like to give Stragier credit for educating the public about bear proofing their garbage.
- Would like to have input regarding shape and style of can so it is not so top-heavy and so the lid does not flip open allowing bears, ravens, and crows' entry to the can.
- Wants to make sure any composting and recycling areas are bear proofed. The STA fish waste composting areas were successful in keeping away bears, so it can be done.
- The biosolids site at Granite Creek is currently a bear attractant – would like to see changes in how the City crews dump their biosolids at that site.
- There are no bear situations at the transfer station. The crews keep it very clean and neat. Agrees that a centralized location is better for recycling in terms of bear safety.
- Curbside recycling could be an issue because of bears.
- Would like to see bear-proof cans around facilities such as the harbors and ball fields.

- Would like to see markings on the downtown cans as tourists often wonder why the garbage cans are all reinforced. If the City has some sort of marking that the cans are “bear proof” it shows the City cares.

Dorik Mechau

- Would like to see more information on technology for turning plastics into fuel.
- Would like to see a different way to recycle yard waste, the McGraw site is difficult to get to and out of the way. Mechau notes that Sitka pays a lot of money to ship yard waste out because people throw it away in their cans. Anderson reminded the public that there is a container at the Transfer Station for people to dispose of their yard waste. Anderson will make sure it is labeled so the public can recognize what it is.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Kerry MacLane

- Would like to see the City divert money back into Sitka. If we are going to spend the money to ship our recyclables and trash out, why not divert the same amount of money into Sitka and employ Sitkans.

Megan Pasternak

- A survey has been done about recycling in the past, and she will get the results to Baugher and CB&I.
- Educating residents is very important and recommended small, occasional tips in the paper regarding recycling and garbage is always important.
- Wanted to remind the committee there is a plastic shredder at the Bottling Company that can be used for shredding plastic.
- There is a machine to dispose of CFLs that is owned by Holland America. The contact is Tim Ryan who works at Sitka Sound Seafoods.
- Would like to see an option to share garbage cans with neighbors.

Mike Litman

- He would like to see the city open a position such as a public information officer or similar role who can advertise recycling information as well as other information. Harmon noted the Clerk’s office is currently discussing different options for getting more information out to the public.

Ken Corson

- Likes the idea of a weighted lid that is bear proof.
- Recycling works, he cut his personal trash 80% simply by recycling.

Hugh Bevan

- An idea for the survey is to have the schools offer extra credit if students bring back completed surveys.

- Wanted to remind the committee that if we lower our waste so much that a company may decide it is not enough and we may not get bids to take our trash.

Kowalski then reminded the committee that there are two slots open for public members. Michelle Putz recommended Mike Litman. Andrew Thoms seconded the recommendation. Committee members present approved, Mike Litman accepted the position. Mike Litman is now a committee member. Putz would like to see the open position advertised to the public.

Megan Pasternak would like to see the last open position advertised to the public so interested citizens could apply. The committee will recommend to people they think could be interested to Baugher.

Adjourn 8:15 p.m.

**UPCOMING MEETINGS**

May 28, 2014

July 23, 2014

August 27, 2014