

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

Meeting Convened at 6:30 p.m.

Advisory Board Members Present:

Kerry MacLane for Michelle Putz
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
Phyllis Hackett, Assembly member
Mike Litman, Public Participant

Advisory Board Members voted in during meeting:

Leah Mason
Jay Stelzenmuller
Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Chair

Staff and Consultants:

Gary Baugher, City and Borough of Sitka
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
Phil Kowalski, CB&I (Chicago Bridge & Iron)
Richard Hertzberg, CB&I

Others:

Ann Delill-Johnson
Jeff Riley

Gary Baugher, City of Sitka Maintenance and Operations Superintendent opened the meeting and introduced the consultant group, Chicago Bridge and Iron (CB&I) representatives Phil Kowalski and Richard Hertzberg.

Phil Kowalski, CB&I started the meeting with administrative matters. The open position on the advisory board was publically advertised and there are three candidates who have expressed

interest and are here at the meeting today; Jay Stelzenmuller, Leah Mason, and Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins. Kowalski recommends admitting the candidates to the advisory committee.

Mike Litman moved to accept all three candidates; Jay Stelzenmuller, Leah Mason, and Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins to the Solid Waste Advisory Committee.

Kerry MacLane seconded the motion.

Voice vote

Phyllis Hackett – Yes

Don Anderson – Yes

Phil Mooney – Yes

Andrew Thoms – Yes

Kerry MacLane for Michelle Putz – Yes

Steven Eisenbeisz – Yes

Scott Brylinski – Yes

Mike Litman – Yes

Vote passed with no opposition and the candidates moved to the table as Advisory Committee Members.

The second administrative matter is acceptance to the bylaws created by CB&I.

Scott Brylinski moved to approve the bylaws as submitted with the changes reflected in membership.

Mike Litman seconded the motion.

Voice vote

Phyllis Hackett – Yes

Don Anderson – Yes

Phil Mooney – Yes

Andrew Thoms – Yes

Kerry MacLane for Michelle Putz – Abstain

Steven Eisenbeisz – Yes

Scott Brylinski – Yes

Mike Litman – Yes

Jay Stelzenmuller – Yes

Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins – Yes

Leah Mason - Yes

Vote passed with one abstention.

Phil Kowalski gave a presentation, please see handout given during the meeting for more detail. There was a survey conducted in Sitka to provide public opinion and assessment of the current system and Mr. Kowalski will go over the results. Priorities for future options will be set during this meeting as well.

In looking at the past 10 years, our trash system has been fairly stable, averaging about 8,200 tons per year. There has been a 3% reduction since 2004, part of that is due to increased recycling efforts and the recession and economic downturn. Within the system, 70% of the waste is collected by Pacific Waste from both commercial and residential generators, and 30% is self-hauled by residents to the transfer station. Recycling trends from recyclables dropped off at the drop-off center are also shown. Recycling averages 587 tons per year and there is an upward trend between 2004 and 2013, showing an increase of 24%. It is important to note that aluminum is not included as the Baranof Barracudas collect this. The diversion rate is 6-7% and junked vehicles and scrap metal has been 6,000-7,000 tons per year for the last 3 years – scrap metal numbers are not included in the diversion numbers.

Composition by weight of various materials in the disposed waste is examined comparing Sitka with Skagway. It is noted that the numbers shown as USEPA are numbers obtained by an annual study nationally. Food waste composes the largest single element in the waste stream. The other large elements are paper and other commodities currently being collected at the drop-off center and that could conceivably be collected through curbside pick up.

Average composition of materials accepted at the recycle center is mostly paper and cardboard; which usually means that a big contributor at the recycle center are local businesses as households usually do not have much cardboard. Aluminum was not included because it goes to the swim team, but if aluminum was included it would be about 2% of the overall recycle stream.

The survey that went out to residents to gauge people's attitudes about the current system and what their interests are going forward has been very successful with approximately 500 surveys returned. Satisfaction for the current collection system provided by Pacific Waste and the results were about 92% either choosing "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied". Responses to the question about satisfaction with current access to recycling services showed 78% of people chose either "very" or "somewhat" satisfied, and 86% of respondents were either "very" or "somewhat" satisfied with the overall program.

Waste Collection provided by Pacific Waste is discussed; 70% of the waste that is disposed of is collected by Alaska Pacific and about 30% is self-haul. There are just over 3,200 residential customers and 234 business accounts. Distribution of container services is that a quarter of the people opt for the 32 gallon service, which is the smallest container size, and 60% opt for the larger 90 gallon size, and about 12% of the customers share a larger tub.

Customer rates are volume-based. A 32-gallon cart is \$25 per month, the 90-gallon cart is \$42 per month, and the larger tub service is \$170 per month. The source of revenue supporting the solid waste system is the monthly rate paid by customers. This covers the collection and disposal costs as well as recycling and administrative costs. The solid waste program is a self-supporting enterprise fund.

Disposal costs are that there is a contract with Republic which includes the cost of operating the transfer station, loading the trucks, moving the trucks to the port, putting them on the barge, barging the containers to Seattle and putting them on a rail car and ultimately disposing at the Roosevelt landfill in Washington State. Costs have grown from \$140 per ton to \$147 per ton currently and there is a provision in the contract that is tied to the consumer price index (CPI), which is 85%. Recycling program costs have two major components; internal and external costs. External costs are the contract rates paid to Republic to process and ship the recyclable materials and internal costs are the costs borne by the City to handle some of the materials. Total costs to handle a ton of recyclables was \$85.50 in 2010 and in 2013 it was \$104.64. This is lower than the cost to transport the material out as trash. The increase over time to handle recyclables was 22% versus 5% increase for trash. The large driver of that is the material revenue received when the materials are sold. They are commodities and they fluctuate over time. Glass is excluded because the glass is repurposed here in Sitka.

Hertzberg noted that CB&I is working with eight communities in the Southeast Alaska Solid Waste Authority; six on Prince of Wales Island, Petersburg, and Wrangell. Four of the cities are in the process of negotiating a contract with Republic – Petersburg, Wrangell, Thorne Bay, and Klawock. The other four communities on POW Island will subcontract to either Klawock or Thorne Bay. Republic has given these cities prices for a variety of services including source-separated recycling and commingled recycling, both with glass and without. Hertzberg asked Republic to provide prices over the last year for commingled and these prices and trends are reflected in the presentation given today by CB&I.

There used to be a company from Juneau who used to collect scrap metal on a barge but that company recently filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy and CB&I currently has a Request for Qualifications out for collection of scrap metal to all Southeast Alaska communities under a coordinated program.

The meeting then shifts to prioritize what the SWAC would like to see in Sitka. CB&I has looked at the surveys, the past studies done by Dorik Mechau's group, and has read Jonathan's report from 2007 – noting that much of the information is the same. Strengths in Sitka are the automated trucks which can be used to collect commingled recyclables using carts. Sitka has universal service, meaning everybody is billed for service in the community. Negatives are that if Sitka goes to commingled, the current baling building and operation will not be able to handle the increased quantities of materials. Isolation and remote location are also negatives to costs. The collection fleet (trash trucks) will need to be replaced soon.

Curbside recycling is new in Southeast Alaska; Juneau has a program now and Petersburg just started a program as well as Haines. The survey showed that people are more interested in curbside recycling than composting. Composting constraints are that many people already manage their own green waste on their property, and it is not entering the waste stream. Food waste is the major organic portion that could be composted, however there is no collection

infrastructure for this material. Leah Mason notes that there is food waste collected by the wastewater system as well as people putting food waste in their garbage disposals.

There are no landfills in Southeast Alaska that waste can go to, therefore all waste from Southeast Alaska must be shipped to the continental United States.

Bear issues must be discussed further; such as costs for bear carts and code enforcement methods. It must be discussed whether only the people who have bear issues pay for special carts or whether all of the rate payers absorb the costs.

The next phase of the meeting is for the SWAC to prioritize the issues and give CB&I a direction to move in. Discussion of all the topics noted previously ensued.

Stelzenmuller wondered what percentage of the population has a problem with bears, and Jeff Riley noted that there are only approximately 150 houses with bear problems, which is less than 10% of the whole. Leah Mason noted that the bear problem is not just to the houses, that the bears take the garbage into the forest and then it becomes a bigger problem, and a problem for the whole community.

Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins would like there to be a chair to help run the discussion and prioritize the topics. Kreiss-Tomkins will take on the facilitator or chair role.

MacLane wondered if waste diversion could help create jobs in Sitka, and Kowalski noted that there is a possibility in curbside recycling and composting, depending upon what the different programs will be.

Kowalski noted that the priorities are starting a commingled recycling pick up, and organics composting as the two diversion options. This is based on previous studies, the survey results, and CBS administration. There are costs associated with these options, but they can be viewed as cost control mechanisms due to the reduction in the amount of refuse disposed and the costs related to disposal. Leah Mason noted that composting and diversion can be done in a phased approach. Kowalski reminded the SWAC that recycling is not a free service and while it costs \$147 a ton to take trash to Washington, it takes \$100 a ton to run a recycle program. Recycling however does have the potential to have a cost offset. Currently the recycling program is very inefficient per Richard Hertzberg. Costs could go down with more efficiency. Brylinski noted that with curbside recycling there would be another pick up which could drive costs up. Anderson confirmed that a new truck would have to be purchased if the option of curbside commingled recycling is chosen. Trucks can cost \$250,000 to \$300,000. It is noted that the refuse trucks need to be replaced and the additional truck could serve as a back-up even if recycling collection service is not implemented.

Depending upon which direction the SWAC wanted to go, CB&I could build different scenarios and price spread sheets, they just need the direction. There are only three companies with large landfills and an RFP could be drafted for cost analysis.

Andrew Thoms made a motion to continue the option of off-island disposal.

Scott Brylinski seconded the motion.

There was no opposition to the motion, motion passed.

Steven Eisenbeisz made a motion to further investigate diversion and curbside recycling as a short-term priority.

Andrew Thoms seconded the motion.

There was no opposition to the motion, motion passed.

Glass recycling was discussed, currently glass is repurposed, however Leah Mason would like to have the SWAC look at reuse of the glass such as at the brewery as an option.

The free 200 pounds at the transfer station was the next topic of discussion. Eisenbeisz is opposed to ending this service. Mason would like to see the amount lowered. Anderson notes this only makes up 10% of total at the transfer station. Jay Sweeney informed the SWAC that this service was started because without it, often citizens will take their trash to the end of the road or down a driveway that does not belong to them. People also store their garbage and wait for the Spring Clean-Up. Michael Harmon brought up the issue of someone using a 32-gallon can, which does not pay for itself, and then using the free 200 pounds to get around the system. Don Anderson notes there does not seem to be any frequent offenders of abusing the free 200 pounds per month. Kowalski notes that per the survey, only 1% say they use the free 200 pounds weekly or more often, 6% say they use it 1-2 times per month, and 77% say they use it a few times a year and 15% say they do not use it at all. Discussion was had about lowering the 200 pounds, however Eisenbeisz noted that it is a small enough amount that contractors will not abuse it but if a resident gets a new mattress or couch they can use the program.

Scott Brylinski made a motion to continue the 200 pounds of free drop off at the transfer station in the rate structure.

Jay Stelzenmuller seconded the motion.

There was no opposition to the motion, motion passed.

Some points and ideas brought up by the SWAC members

- Phil Mooney: There are no ordinances for fining or punishing people who create bear attractants, which makes it hard to monitor.
- Leah Mason: Worm composting could be an option for food waste issues – especially in big producing areas such as Pioneer Home, schools, and grocery stores.
- Rebates for garbage disposals were discussed, Michael Harmon noted the solid waste program would have to subsidize the rebates and it would be hard to track the use.

- Richard Hertzberg reminded the group that the political process should be remembered, and this process is to find the best program for all of Sitka, the ideals and values of all citizens are not the same across the board.
- Phil Kowalski noted there is no collection mechanism for collecting food waste and even though food waste is a large component of the waste stream, collecting it may not be feasible at this time. It would be possible to start organic recycling at schools or other big food producers, which would benefit them by lowering the frequency of trash pickups.

Andrew Thoms made a motion that with diversion, CB&I consider how to remove food waste, compostable waste, and yard waste out of the waste stream.

Steven Eisenbeisz is opposed to this motion because he feels this is against what the citizens of Sitka say they want from the results of the survey. Thoms notes that he is not talking about setting up a composting system, but setting up scenarios for commercial facilities or schools, or advertising for green waste disposal at Granite Creek not in the waste stream.

Steven Eisenbeisz made a motion to investigate cost neutral or cost reducing diversion or self-sustaining opportunities for organics.

Leah Mason seconded the motion.

There was no opposition to the motion, motion passed.

It is noted by Pacific Waste and the CB&I survey that the majority of people seem to be diverting their green waste on their own property already, and there is a can for green waste at the Transfer Station.

Steven Eisenbeisz wants to make sure there is ease of use for the organics diversion, because the public will not use something, no matter how much money it saves, if it is hard to use. Andrew Thoms notes that it would be better to focus on larger users by putting in large-scale garbage disposals for diverting the food waste to the wastewater system.

Bear issues will be discussed at the next meeting. Especially how possibly having two cans a week on the curb – one for trash and one for recyclables - will affect the bears. Rate changes, changes in services, as well as keeping baseline services will also be discussed at the next meeting.

Adjourn 9:15 p.m.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

July 23, 2014

August 27, 2014