

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

Meeting Minutes  
November 13, 2014 – Centennial Hall

Meeting Convened at 6:30 p.m.

**Advisory Board Members Present:**

Jay Stelzenmuller, Public Participant  
Michelle Putz, Climate Action Plan  
Dorik Mechau, Island Institute  
Scott Brylinsky, Public Participant  
Don Anderson, Pacific Waste  
Andrew Thoms, Sitka Conservation Society  
Mike Litman, Public Participant  
Leah Mason, Public Participant  
Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Chair

**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  
Gary Baugher, City and Borough of Sitka

Meeting convened at 6:38 p.m.

Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins went over the agenda, noting that the minutes will need to be approved by motion. Then there will be a summary by City staff, and then the group will deliberate and make a motion with regards to the choice the group prefers the City and Borough of Sitka (CBS) to move forward on. The final part of the meeting will be to set an agenda for the next meeting.

**1. Minutes of August 28, 2014 SWAC Meeting (must be approved by motion)**

Litman moved to approve after clarifying a statement about residential subsidizing commercial, and Harmon noted the minutes are accurate, the CBS believed that is how the rates were going, but found out later that commercial actually subsidizes residential. No change is needed. Thoms proposed a change to the minutes on the first page, recommending changing the word, “nonissues” to “an issue we cannot deal with right now”. There was no opposition to the proposed change.

**Mike Litman made a motion to accept the minutes of the August 28, 2014 SWAC meeting as amended. Dorik Mechau seconded the motion.**

**Michelle Putz; Yes, Dorik Mechau; Yes, Scott Brylinsky; Yes, Don Anderson; Yes, Andrew Thoms; Yes, Mike Litman; Yes, Leah Mason; Yes, Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins; Yes. There was no opposition to the motion, motion passed.**

**2. Brief Summary by Gary Baugher and Jay Sweeney (5 minutes)**

Kreiss-Tomkins reminded the SWAC group that as chair, he will make note of who would like to speak and call on them so they can speak in order.

Baugher confirmed that all SWAC members received their packets. He went over the summarization of the Solid Waste Research Project document describing that the City of Petersburg started curbside commingle recycling a year ago. City of Petersburg, Public Works Director Karl Hagerman noted that it is hard to figure out the numbers but that the potential to set up a system with all the options out there.

The Chicago Bridge and Iron (CB&I) document as discussed, Baugher did not read the Solid Waste Research Document because the SWAC group was emailed this document. The document also went over five options for commingle and municipal solid waste (MSW) pick up. Baugher did not describe each option in detail as it was provided to the SWAC group and is included with these minutes.

- Option 1. Current System, no recycle
- Option 2. MSW every other week, recycle every other week
- Option 3. MSW every week, recycle every other week
- Option 4. MSW every other week, recycle every week
- Option 5. MSW every week, recycle every week

Baugher notes that larger waste receptacles subsidize smaller waste receptacles, multiple pickups a week subsidize the cost of single pickups per week, and commercial services subsidize the residential services. Putz questioned the term, “drop off center partial” and Baugher explained that there would still be an open public drop off center.

Sweeney then prefaced all of his comments by telling the SWAC that his family of four is dedicated to recycling and composting. Having said this, after conducting a financial analysis he finds it highly unlikely that commingled curbside recycling can be accomplished at either a cost break-even or in a way that lowers the overall cost in Sitka. If Sitka moves to curbside recycling there will be an additional charge levied on the citizens; this is because we simply will not get the volume of commingled materials voluntarily put out into the bins without some kind of system of enforcements and fines (which staff is unwilling to recommend) or without a level of commodity pricing being at a point which is just stratospherically high from where we are now. Fixed costs must be increased to bring curbside up to a level as a fund. When our numbers are compared to what has been experienced in Petersburg, our assumptions and our analyses are in line with what they are experiencing, and we are very similar.

The SWAC was then to reference the cost matrix spreadsheet that was provided, and is included with these minutes. Sweeney clarified that the solid waste account is not at a break-even point now. The utility is losing money currently and there is very little the CBS can control because the program is contracted. In order to project numbers for the scenarios; first, projections must be made to make the accounts level and not negative. A year from now the contract will come up for bid and it is highly likely that there will be an inflationary factor added into the contract, regardless of who bids for it, and if commingle curbside recycle is chosen, there is some charge or subsidy that will be necessary. These assumptions are factored into the spreadsheet.

Sweeney explains that what needs to be done if the decision is made to choose curbside recycling. First, assumptions would have to be made, then the fixed equipment necessary to move forward (additional truck, other equipment, and the recycling bins which are approximately \$80 per bin) must be acquired and costs outlaid. Then see what happens as the project moves forward. It may work out really well, but worst case scenario is that the cost is higher than Sweeney has estimated.

The spreadsheet shows the assumptions with the average monthly percent increase per customer. It does this by adding the set costs (collection, recycling, disposal, and handling) to a CPI increase to bring up total cost. This has been divided evenly by the number of customers giving an allocated cost per customer, not a rate. This cost compares to the currently cost per customer and shows what the needed average monthly percentage increase per customer would be for each of the options.

Sweeney reminded the SWAC there is not a good idea what the collection cost for commingle recycling would be; Sweeney guessed it would be less. Just to break even, not lower the cost of solid waste, a credit of \$90 commodity (which is what is being experienced in Petersburg); a commodity ton of \$177.29 must be reached, which is an increased tonnage from 1,983 to 3,907. This level of recycling is not being achieved by other communities similar to Sitka who have commingled curbside recycling. Brylinsky thanked Jay Sweeney for this thorough analysis.

Putz confirmed that this assumes everyone will pay the extra fee, whether they recycle or not, Jay confirmed. Putz also wondered if the amount of recycling were to go up enough and the value of recycling goes up enough, could the fees drop? Sweeney responded that his analysis says no, and this is not being achieved in Petersburg. Sweeney did admit it was not impossible. Mason wanted confirmation of the current price for sorted, Sweeney confirmed \$104 average commodity cost received. Sweeney reminded the SWAC there are many numbers out there to be used, however it is unknown for sure unless something is tried. If something is tried and the assumptions prove differently than the CBS and it's residents must live with whatever the ramifications of that are.

Sweeney explained that he used monthly financial statements and tracks the financial performance on the fund month-to-month and on a trailing 12-month basis. These results are compared to the prior period and to the plan. If a positive trend is seen, staff can go back to the Assembly to recommend a change in the rates. Anderson wondered if the \$70 for processing fee for commingle was factored in, Sweeney confirmed.

Mechau wondered what stretch of time these fees encompassed and Sweeney confirmed just the current fiscal year. Sweeney also explained that using prior costs do not have a good impact on looking forward and that commodity credits go up and down for no apparent reason and it is hard to guess what it will do in the future. Mechau wonders if the amount of sorted tonnage received has changed over the year. Sweeney notes that it is hard to determine because the same commodities do not get sent out on a regular basis, but when there is enough for a full container van.

Mason wondered about any plateau of recyclables sorted and how much of that comes from the limitation on the space provided, Baugher and Sweeney note there is none, the Recycle Center is open every day. Putz declared a Point of Order, and made a clarification; she recently spoke with Sweeney about the question, "could we increase self-sorted recycling and would the cost increase?" and he responded if the option of increasing self-sorted recycling is chosen, it would take some more equipment but less than any of the curbside options, so sorted recycling could increase at a lower cost than through curbside recycling.

Stelzenmuller trusts Sweeney's data, but wonders what the bottom line is, and what it would cost to commingle. He also would not accept any less than once a week pick up for MSW. Sweeney notes that it will cost \$3.93 per customer to add commingled curbside recycling for weekly every other month pick up, giving the caveat that these numbers are all assumptions and there is truly know way to know for sure. Stelzenmuller confirmed again that he trusts Sweeney's numbers and analysis. Baugher added that until a Request for Proposals (RFP) happens, real costs will not be known.

Kreiss-Tomkins proposes to move on to the pros and cons of weekly or every-other week pick up versus the current operation at the drop off center versus moving to commingle at curbside. Kreiss-Tomkins wanted to confirm that the SWAC has no more questions about the assumptions that Sweeney has given the SWAC. Thoms inquired about the increase and noted that it seems very low. Sweeney reminded the SWAC that the increases are amortized over ten years.

Mechau wondered if the CBS has heard from Petersburg whether they believe that Sweeney's assumptions are close to target and if they are happy with their program. Kreiss-Tomkins recently was in Petersburg and spent a lot of time discussing both Sitka's proposed plans and Petersburg's current program; and they feel very positive about where their program is now. They also believe that the numbers that the CBS has assumed are right on.

Litman wondered if the catching the deficit is added into Sweeney's spreadsheet and factored in and Sweeney confirmed, yes, it is factored in. Gorman wondered which option the \$3.93 fee is for, and Sweeney responded the fee for every option.

Mason wondered how Sitka and Petersburg compare and Sweeney responded that Petersburg is the most comparable city in terms of population, personality of the people, and businesses. Petersburg also has the same shipping issues as Sitka. Mason wondered how Petersburg's projections added up now that they are a year out and Kreiss-Tomkins noted that the costs were right on target, but diversion was estimated to be between 30-40% but it has been closer to 20%.

Anderson noted that if commingle arrives at Rabanco and is contaminated, we get charged \$70 a ton, but they still process it and we get whatever credit is left. Shredded paper in plastic bags is a big problem now because it arrives in plastic bags, and Rabanco considers the plastic bag a contamination.

**Jay Stelzenmuller made a motion to accept the numbers and assumptions that staff has come up with. Scott Brylinsky seconded the motion.**

**Michelle Putz; Yes, Dorik Mechau; Yes, Scott Brylinsky; Yes, Don Anderson; Yes, Andrew Thoms; Yes, Mike Litman; Yes, Leah Mason; Yes, Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins; Yes. There was no opposition to the motion, motion passed.**

### **3. Deliberation and Recommendations (choice approved by motion)**

Stelzenmuller is not in favor of anything other than weekly pickup of garbage because of, "vermin, bears, and stink". Sweeney notes that when personal containers are full, it could increase contamination if they throw garbage in their recycle bin.

Kreiss-Tomkins would like to see the SWAC deliberate on two separate choices, the frequency of MSW pick up and then the frequency of commingled recycling pick up and these two decisions should be made independently. If no decision can be made, the group can always decide that the current option is the best option. There are other options that are not on the table, and can be entertained as well.

Putz would like to see an interim option of keeping the program the same and try to increase voluntary recycling in the community by adding education, and seeing if that would be beneficial. Putz knows there will be increases for the program to catch up and some equipment does need to be purchased to increase capacity at the recycling center. Sweeney noted if recycling got to about a 21% diversion rate, the City would need more space and buildings to do recycling and the cost of these facilities were not calculated into the costs for curbside recycling. Kreiss-Tomkins interjected that this is the status quo, and Putz agreed, but it is the status quo at a much increased rate.

Kreiss-Tomkins would like the group to decide on the frequency for MSW collection; weekly or every other week. Brylinsky believes weekly collection to be mandatory for reasons already stated.

**Jay Stelzenmuller made a motion to collect municipal solid waste every week. Andrew Thoms seconded the motion.**

Mason would like to see what happens after education and training initiatives move forward and are successful that the SWAC group looks at this rate of pick up again.

**Michelle Putz; Yes, Dorik Mechau; Yes, Scott Brylinsky; Yes, Don Anderson; Yes, Andrew Thoms; Yes, Mike Litman; Yes, Leah Mason; Yes, Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins; Yes. There was no opposition to the motion, motion passed.**

The group then discussed commingled pick up. Putz inquired about the opportunity to have different sized garbage cans. Anderson noted that the can status would change with commingle recycle; 96 gallon can will stay, but MSW would go to a 48-gallon can if the group stays with MSW weekly. If the group decides on every other week, an additional can may need to be needed.

Commingled cans could take paper, cardboard, plastic, glass, aluminum cans, and tin cans. Anderson responded that glass does not get put in the cans because it just adds tonnage, it is not worth any money at the other end, and we have to pay to sort it. Glass can still be taken to the recycle center. Cardboard can also be taken to the recycle center separately to make room in the recycle bins. The recycling center will continue to be operated.

Mechau wondered if this will be put out to bid, and Baugher responded yes, when this group makes a decision, a bidding process will follow. There will be two options on the bid; how much would be charged for the status quo and then an option or alternate which is whatever this group decides.

It is another collection company in Petersburg but the trash goes to the same off island company, Rabanco. Litman confirmed that cardboard and glass will be dropped off at the drop off center, Anderson notes that it makes the most sense, glass is worth nothing and adds weight, and cardboard will fill up the can. Both will be taken to the recycle center.

Stelzenmuller wondered what staff recommends for commingled recycling collection. Sweeney recommends every other week. Sweeney has four members in his family and they are active recyclers. They would fill up a recycling bin in two weeks. Baugher recommends every other week. Harmon recommended every other week, MSW and recycle rotated. Harmon likes this option because then the program can be amended after some time goes by. Harmon would

like to see a pilot project of every other week collection with a group of volunteers willing to do it, to test how much is received in each bucket – is a 90-gallon bucket filled?

**Jay Stelzenmuller made a motion that the committee recommend a commingled pick up every other week. Michelle Putz seconded the motion.**

Litman says he is an aggressive recycler as well but needs to be convinced that curbside recycling will have a beneficial effect on the planet and humanity in the future. Brylinsky wanted to confirm that the bid would include a recycling option that is the one this group recommends tonight. Baugher confirms that yes, that is the intent, but that the base bid for the request for proposals (RFP) is for the status quo.

Putz wondered if there could be a community recycling bin? Anderson confirmed, but noted that with community recycling bins, often people put trash in and contaminate the commingle.

Kreiss-Tomkins reminded the group there is a motion on the table for every other week collection of curbside commingle.

**Michelle Putz; Yes, Dorik Mechau; Yes, Scott Brylinsky; Yes, Don Anderson; Yes, Andrew Thoms; Yes, Mike Litman; Yes, Leah Mason; Yes, Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins; Yes. There was no opposition to the motion, motion passed.**

Kreiss-Tomkins summarized that the SWAC group just finalized the two options of MSW collection every week and curbside commingle collection every other week. This scenario will be weighed against the status quo, which is a separated stream collection. There could be elevated rates of diversion in the future through education or activism.

Litman would like to hear more reasons why commingle is good. Kreiss-Tomkins explained that recycling is good for two reasons; the first is a possibility for the long term recycling is a cost saver for Sitka relative to MSW. The other reason is an environmental reason, and the reduction of the consumption of raw and virgin resources. The bottom line is if commingled curbside recycling, the amount of recycling in Sitka goes up, it basically doubles. Kreiss-Tomkins believes it is the environmentally responsible choice.

Litman wanted clarification; partial recycle sorting will still need to happen, contamination is a real problem, and wants to know about resources for public education. Litman would like to see an updated recycling center with a person working there and believes this could increase the amount of recycling and increase the cost savings. He believes that if people recycle at this new center could take in the recycling and then money could be taken off utility bills – providing people with a powerful incentive to recycle.

Kreiss-Tomkins responded by saying that he has been the person who has worked at the recycling center for several hours a day talking with people. He had an advertising budget of

\$30,000-\$40,000 a year for print media, PSAs on Raven Radio and flyers around town. He found the diversion rate did not increase in Sitka through education and advocacy. Norm Campbell dedicated a huge amount of energy to it in the past. In addressing Litman's concerns that the environmental benefits of commingled system are not as great as originally thought, Kreiss-Tomkins notes that even if contamination levels are present, the overall stream of recycling will be greater. The reduction of raw, virgin resources being consumed in the world is such a net beneficial change that it is still a hugely positive outcome. A culture of recycling is created and benefits will continue to grow.

Mason reminds the group that even if the recycle is contaminated it is still sorted at the other end, the City just does not receive the credit. Regarding aluminum, Sweeney believes it will be so much easier for the average Sitka resident to just throw commingled recycling in their bin at their house and more aluminum will be put in curbside containers than to collect and take to the bin for Baranof Barracudas. Gorman indicated that the Barracudas would like to end the program anyway. Sweeney notes that when negotiating a commodity credit, Petersburg was able to negotiate per load, and the predominance of what is in each load determines the credit.

Stelzenmuller confirmed that the lack of education is a problem. He would like to see more education or hire a recycling manager and possibly financial incentives. Sweeney acknowledged that dollars could be devoted to increased education. However incentives would cost more than would generate benefits because of administrative costs and implementation costs.

Anderson would like to invite Jeff Riley, the General Manager of Republic and he can better answer questions about incentives.

Litman explained that Sitka is very small and is thousands of miles away from where garbage is dumped. Sitka has a tiny impact in the global scheme of things. Mason reminded the committee that this is still an impact.

Putz inquired as to whether the contract, once completed can be amended. Baugher noted that is hard to change things because the people bidding on it do not want to put prices on something if they think the contract will change back and forth. Harmon explained that the cost of the contract will go up if there is any risk of shifting of the details of the contract. The longer the term of the contract, the lower the price should be because prices can be amortized. The contract will most likely be ten years.

Gorman reminded the SWC that in the survey, the people did not want anything that had an extra charge, and that this result will go to the Assembly for vote before the RFP goes out. The Assembly will possibly ask the community and may put it to a vote.

Stelzenmuller wonders about time frames for this bid. Harmon responded that numbers will probably be available in February. This will give time to put it out to bid and get responses. The current contract expires in April.

**Scott Brylinsky made a motion that this committee recommend to the administration to go out to bid with a base bid for the status quo with an alternate bid of collecting municipal solid waste (MSW) every week and commingle curbside recycling every other week. Michelle Putz seconded the motion.**

Litman has some reservations about MSW pick up every week and believes it could be picked up every other week. Putz believes it should be picked up every week, especially if people are not composting. Thoms noted the Bear Working Group tried something like this and says they received many complaints. Some people have baby diapers and people who generate a lot of trash. Mason has experienced both every week and every other week and wants to be open to being able to scale back that every week collection of every week. Stelzenmuller reminds the SWAC that whatever this group decides upon must be sold to the Assembly and the general public. Kreiss-Tomkins wonders if the base bid is the status quo, is that inferred to be the preferred alternative to the Assembly? Brylinsky views it as gathering options.

**Michelle Putz; Yes, Dorik Mechau; Yes, Scott Brylinsky; Yes, Don Anderson; Yes, Andrew Thoms; Yes, Mike Litman; Yes, Leah Mason; Yes, Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins; Yes. There was no opposition to the motion, motion passed.**

**4. Schedule for next meeting:** Scheduled for March 2015. The SWAC group will be notified when date is set. Agenda items will be to discuss the RFP results and to discuss the spreadsheet entitled, "Cost by Service Class".

#### **OTHER ITEMS**

- Kreiss-Tomkins will present the findings to the Assembly meeting of November 25, 2014.

#### **FUTURE POSSIBLE AGENDA ITEMS**

- Glass: disposal/reuse (Leah Mason)
- Additional Recycle center, or sharing cans in neighborhoods (Michelle Putz)
- Getting kitchen scraps out of waste stream, garbage disposals. Possibly tasking staff to have an analysis of installing garbage disposals, costs/benefits. (Litman)

Adjourn 8:45 p.m.

#### **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

March 2015