

Notes

RI Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) Advisory Committee

December 10, 2013 @ RI RRC – Johnston, RI - 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

I. Debrief of the Regional Forums

Jeff Davis of Statewide Planning started the meeting with an agenda overview. He then went on to summarize the regional public forums that were held since the last advisory committee meeting. The forums were conducted in conjunction with a solid waste policy related survey. A total of 24 respondents took the survey.

The summary of the regional forums included the following concerns (see handout):

- What's Next? What happens when the Central Landfill is full in 25 Years?- This is perhaps the largest concern and it's a major reason for this plan update.
- Finances & Tipping fees- Is the current system working? Will pay-as-you-throw work? What incentives exist?
- Business Options- Businesses are concerned with their financial bottom line. What incentives exist for recycling?
- Education- More education is needed across the board in solid waste management.
- Commercial Recycling
- Recycling participation- What are rates by town? What else can be done?
- Recycling Items and Markets- What can and cannot be recycled? Some still are not fully aware
- Composting & Food waste- How can we divert food wastes away from the landfill?
- Miscellaneous- Plastic shopping bags (Barrington)

The group then discussed several outlets relating to education on solid waste management topics including:

- A film screening of the documentary "Trash", at the Newport Film Festival. Over 200 people were in attendance and plans for future screenings are being discussed
- RIDEM's Environmental Professionals group was able to generate several survey responses
- The RI Green Buildings Council is a possible partner in outreach
- The RI League of Cities and Towns holds their annual meeting each January, were a segment on the SWMP is being planned
- The Land and Water Summit is held each Spring at URI. The potential exists to be part of the summit.
- Sarah also mentioned that the RRC's quarterly municipal meeting was recently held, where state and local elected officials were present. The elected officials remain engaged in the process.

Other suggestions for outreach partners included the State Legislature's Policy Offices, the Home Show and Flower Shows, the RI Food Policy Council and the URI Master Gardening program for matters involving composting.

II. Addressing Comments on Draft Plan Sections 1 & 2

The first suggestion was taken from Jaime Rhodes' submitted comments (see handout) to make adjustments to the pie chart.

III. Draft Plan Section 3 (+ Discussion)

Mike O'Connell started a slideshow presentation on Section 3. The presentation started with looking at the financial side of operations as a preface to the strategies. Mike explained that total tons of waste has decreased from 1.1 million in 2007, to about .7 million today. Revenues for the RIRRC have fallen as total tons accepted have fallen. As a result, operational expenses had to be cut. This reduction in total waste is an overall positive for the state, but it does cause a funding dilemma. A "fee-for-service" scenario leads to reduced volume which leads to reduced revenue.

Mike O. then led the discussion of the three Near-Term Implementation Scenarios (See Handout). The three options are:

1. Maintain Status Quo- Under this scenario, the current loading of 750k tons per year would be maintained and the expected closing date of the landfill will be 2038
2. Invest in New Programs to reduce waste- This scenario would extend the life of the landfill to 2045 by implementing new programs mainly aimed at boosting recycling, composting and food diversion.
3. Become a Primarily Municipal Disposal Facility- Under this option, the landfill will be used primarily to service waste from municipalities. Commercial waste will cost significantly more, leading to reduced tonnage. Under this scenario, the landfill will close in 2047.

Long-term scenarios were also presented. These possible strategies could be enacted after a Near-Term solution is pursued. The four Long-term options include:

1. Transport/Dispose most RI waste at out of state locations- Landfill close date: beyond 2065, minimal local landfill as a back-up
2. Utilize Technology to process solid waste- This would also push the landfill closure date past 2065. Utilize waste-to-energy technologies
3. Pursue a "Zero" Waste Objective- Focus on diversion of organics, durables, MRF, special waste. This would result in a closure date of 2045-2050
4. Explore feasibility of a major expansion of a RI landfill- Acquisition of property and expansion of current site (or additional site). Landfill closure date: 2065

The group then proceeded to discuss these options and several questions were raised. It was made clear that the Town of Johnston would be adamantly opposed to any eastward

expansion, as that would further impose on residences. The only option for on-site expansion would be to the West, which consists of some wetlands. This option would come with a great deal of environmental remediation concerns. As Eugenia noted, the “shipping –out-of-state” scenario would also come with its own set of governmental/policy ramifications.

Mike M. responded to a suggestion to add a column to the “Strategies” chart titled “Impacts/Uncertainties”. He said that there was some internal discussion about that idea and if need be, it could be added.

The idea of implementing an across the board “pay-as-you-throw”(PAYT) system was discussed, specifically what it will do to recycling rates. Mike M stated that some municipal recycling rates are above 35% and the PAYT could lead to an additional 50k tons of recyclables.

Another option that members mentioned was that of municipal tipping fees. Dan Beardsley cautioned that we have to be careful moving forward, as the bottom line of today may not be the bottom line of tomorrow. He stated that tip fees have been looked at in the past as he was part of a 1994 Tip Fee Commission.

Jeff reiterated the point that all of these possible ideas need to be shopped to as many stakeholder groups as possible. Nancy reminded the group that the 2005 SWMP was specifically done to address the Phase 6 expansion, but it was not long-term in its approach,. This new plan needs to take an in depth look at long term options.

Regarding the “Zero” waste strategy, Alison Rogers cautioned that the terminology used is very important and she stated several national examples of the success (such as Unilever) in using the “Zero Landfill” approach in terminology and related strategies.

IV. Next Steps

Jeff recapped several points, including the idea of turning the strategies chart into a survey form for distribution. Feedback on this section will be sought by the end of January, 2014, as an early draft of Section 4 should be available.

Remaining meeting are:

March 4

June 10

September 9

The Solid Waste Management Plan web page on the Division of Planning website can be found at:

<http://www.planning.ri.gov/statewideplanning/land/solidwaste.php>