

**Clark County
Solid Waste Advisory Commission
Regular Meeting
Thursday, June 5, 2008
6:00 – 8:00 PM**

Members Present: Eldon Wogen, Mike Carnahan, Richard Baker, Don Ebbeson, Lisa Schmidt, Jeanne Stewart

Members Absent: Rebecca Wale, Jack McClary

Staff: Anita Largent, Judy Vaughn, Mike Piper, Mike Davis, Gary Bickett, Pete DuBois, Rich McConaghy, Tanya Gray

Others: Dan Schooler, Den Fusso

I. Roll Call, Approval of Minutes:

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the May 1, 2008 meeting be approved as written. Motion passed unanimously.

II. Updates: County Public Health, County Solid Waste, City of Vancouver

Clark County – Anita Largent

1. The Board of County Commissioner's work session was held on May 14th. Solid waste staff received authorization to move forward with the new recycling contract. The commissioners approved the single carts with a glass bin on the side. The commissioners approved the solid waste program purchasing the carts. They requested that negotiations be done for both weekly and every other week and a third scenario of weekly but the customer would have the option of every other week service if they wanted. Negotiations have not yet started with the highest ranked proposer.
2. Two articles from the Columbian about single cart recycling. Both articles were fairly accurate and set a positive tone.
3. The Recycled Arts Festival is the 28th and 29th of June at Esther Short Park and everyone is encouraged to attend.
4. Information from the Seattle Public Utilities was e-mailed to SWAC members and is Item III on tonight's agenda.
5. Solid Waste Management Plan Update: The SEPA comment period has ended. Only two comments were received. The first was from the Department of Ecology and the other from the Cowlitz Indian Tribe. Department of Ecology reminded us of the state's Beyond Waste Plan and to incorporate as much of that as we can. And the Cowlitz Indian Tribe requests notification when we are siting any new facilities. A Determination of Non-Significance has been issued for the Plan. The schedule is that Ecology has until the end of this month to finish their review of the plan.
6. Pete DuBois has been appointed as the new Sustainability Coordinator for the county. In his presentation tonight – he will be functioning in that role. He is going to be working on getting the county more energized and moving forward with our Sustainability Plan.
7. The Washougal Transfer Station Operating Permit has passed the appeal period and the permit is now in effect. Columbia Resource Company is planning to have a ground breaking on June 27th. SWAC members will receive an invitation. Gary

added that the design submitted for the Moderate Risk Waste Structure is moving forward.

Q: Are we still on track for getting the plan completed this year? A: Yes we are. After the final review is completed by Ecology, we will start the Open Houses for public information throughout the county and then meet with the various city councils followed by formal adoptions from the cities and the county.

City of Vancouver – Rich McConaghy

1. The Southwest Washington Sustainability Conference and Trade Show will be held at the Hilton July 10th and 11th. The theme for this year is **Climate, Commerce, Community – A Call to Action**. The keynote speaker is Robert Kennedy Jr. On Saturday July 12th the Water Resource Center is holding a **Greenfest**. There will be vendors and workshops. This will be a free event and is open to the public.

Q: Is there a registration fee for the Sustainability Conference? Q: Yes the cost is \$275. Anita told SWAC that if anyone is interested in attending that county staff will make the arrangements for them.

County Public Health – Gary Bickett

1. Ruefener Landfill: Mr. Christensen has said they are going to present an alternative closure design to the state. There is another meeting scheduled for the end of June with all the parties of record and their attorneys.
2. A meth lab was closed down in Camas approximately a month ago. The City of Camas would like to have that house demolished. The house is near a daycare center and this is the second time that a lab has been closed down in this house. The City has requested Public Health assistance with this task. Tony Eby, Clark County Sheriff's office, is our community educator on methamphetamines.
3. Illegal landfill north of Battle Ground: Gary mentioned an old abandoned greenhouse place that has been found. People have been bringing in materials from Oregon and burying the stuff on site. He mentioned this as another reason that it's important to remove the exemption from the code.
4. We mentioned General Chemical at the last meeting. They are located just across from the Ruefener Landfill. The Department of Ecology is in the process of reauthorizing their discharge permit. General Chemical manufacturers alum and produced this slurry which is used to fill in on site. Ecology has suggested that they need a Solid Waste permit. Public Health Office did not agree with this. Ecology, Gary and Bryan (site hazard assessment) are reviewing the draft for this discharge permit.
5. A new yard debris receiving and processing facility has been identified on the north side of Fourth Plain at the former location of Cliff Koppe Metals. This is a site that has been considered for cleanup. Public Health thinks they should at least have a conditional use permit. These types of operations are now exempt from a solid waste permit, but because of the potential impact of noise, dust, odor, runoff and other issues are a concern a conditional use permit should be in place.
6. Leichner Landfill – there was a submission yesterday of a Draft 5 year monitoring plan. Before they send the draft to Ecology they want us to review it. City of Vancouver Public Works also received a copy. They are proposing to change some of their monitoring protocol.

Q. What is the standard means of cleaning up a meth house? A: There are certified companies that address these sites. Gary did not know the level of contamination but did note there is an option for a city of municipality to do a demolition of the site.

Q: Where is this material disposed of? A: The demolition itself would need to go to a Subtitle D Landfill. It's the volatiles that people breathe that are in the structure that are the hazard. We will probably have to go to a Plans Examiner for authority and direction.

III. Report and Discussion on Seattle's Plastic Bag Program:

There are two proposed ordinances ready to go forward to the Seattle City Council on June 10th. One ordinance proposes a 20 cent green fee on all disposal shopping bags (plastic or paper) to discourage the use of disposable bags of any type and to encourage shoppers to use reusable bags. Seattle anticipates that over time they could reach a 90% reduction in disposal bags. Currently there is only 1 out of 10 using the reusable bags. The second ordinance which will be discussed at a future meeting will be to propose a ban on the use of polystyrene containers in restaurants, fast food outlets, coffee shops and all other food service establishments. This will include packaging such as meat trays and egg cartons.

Q: Does this cover all size and types of plastic bags? A: No it is just the "t-shirt bag" which is the larger grocery bag and the full size plastic bags.

Q: Who pays the 20¢? A: Consumers will pay the 20¢ - the stores will keep 5¢ and the remainder will be sent off to the local jurisdiction. The local jurisdiction will use this money to pay for reusable bags and education for the program.

Q: Why are you highlighting Seattle when so many other jurisdictions are looking at doing this same thing? A: We have information on other cities as well. Ireland has placed a tax (33¢ in US dollars) on all disposal bags and they have reached a 90% reduction. A food and clothing store in Britain voluntarily began charging for disposable bags and reached a 66% reduction. San Francisco banned the plastic bags.

Pete said that it is estimated that Clark County uses approximately 70 million of these bags per year or an estimated 400 bags per family per year. Pete worked with a representative from Fred Meyers to arrive at this number. Recycling the disposal bags is encouraged but very few make it to the recycle containers. Only about 5% of the bags are recycled. The plastic bags do not biodegrade, they photo degrade.

Q: So why is the green fee being considered? A: It is an economic incentive and mirrors what has been done previously on batteries and tires. The proposed Seattle Ordinance also exempts businesses that have sales of a million dollars or less per year. They would charge the fee but keep the revenue.

Q: Would a special accounting system need to be set up to know how many bags went through? A: For the stores, it would be similar what already occurs now.

Q: Is this a taxable item? A: Yes

Q: How hard would it be to get an accurate count of how many bags are currently going through the county? The suggestion was to use this count and do an education piece promoting the reusable bags. A: Pete felt that the numbers he received were very accurate. Relying on education and voluntary participation would impact the compliance from one out of ten to three out of ten; where the 20¢ fee could have a participation rate of 9 out of 10.

SWAC had many concerns about this presentation and what the meaning was behind this presentation.

- It appears there is a one way line of thinking and we are not necessarily considering other options; we need a broad perspective; an impartial investigation must be done.
- Why couldn't stores start charging 5¢ a bag voluntarily?
- Most stores have bags for sale now and their racks of bags are everywhere. Why not put an educational tool kit together with all this information and facts and appeal to the citizens to make the right choice to use a reusable bag on their own.
- Aren't plastic bags made out of petroleum and doesn't that piece add to the fuel prices?
- How does this affect lower economic groups? Traditionally they generate more garbage than the affluent people. Are you going to be taxing that group of people that are using more bags? These are the people that can least afford it.
- How do you charge a tax on a tax?
- After working in the plastics industry for 24 years and even looking online – 60% of the companies think there will be bans on more plastic things.
- It's clear that plastic bags are going to go by the way side – but I'd like to see more in the investigation you're doing, perhaps other options, how to get these new bags distributed. Let's see a better plan of how things could happen here in Clark County.
- We should focus on our biggest volume of material that is not recycled or reused.

Mike Piper and Pete DuBois agreed that they will come back to this Board and bring more options and less generic information. They also will explore the legal authority to do something like this here in Clark County and the cities and towns.

Input from the Audience:

Den Fusso asked to speak about this plastic bag discussion. She called herself an average citizen and she thought people should be charged 75¢ a bag. If they're selling bags for 85¢ - why not pay the extra 10¢ and purchase a bag. She said she herself has taken canvas bags for over 20 years to the store. So if it's more expensive for people that don't have the reusable bags – they will have to find ways to change their method of thinking and find the bags. She suggested that bags could be given away at county and city events. She mentioned that she and a neighbor did attend the Home and Garden Show this year and each received a bag. Because Den has so many bags already she gave hers to her neighbor.

One question though, what about stores like WalMart that sells clothing and food products? Or places like Home Depot that uses a lot of bags. Places like these need to be considered.

She said she applauded SWAC and that they are definitely on the right track. She stated this is an important problem that needs to be grappled with firmly. Education is a good idea, but feels that we need to charge for bags to convert people over to a new way of thinking. We all have to work and live on this planet and we need to start doing something about taking care of it.

IV. Discussion on Out-of-County Waste Disposal: Gary Bickett and Anita Largent

When staff had the work session with the Board of County Commissioners in February on the SWMP one of the issues that Commissioner Morris raised was that she would like for SWAC to have a public discussion about the ethics of transporting and disposing of our waste out of county, in Eastern Oregon.

C: It is creating jobs in the area and people want those jobs. They enjoy the economy that this is creating and from an environmental point it just doesn't work over here. The second point is that this county and all the cities within the county are working very hard to get our recycling numbers up and the actual tonnage that goes into that landfill down as low as possible. As long as we continue the sustainability items and the recycling and continue to increase those efforts, that is the balance.

C: Our waste is considered part of the Oregon waste shed and therefore we must comply with Oregon state law regarding certain aspects of the recycling program, education, and waste reduction.

Q: On what authority are we legally part of the Oregon waste shed? A: Because waste that we generate is disposed of in an Oregon facility. We provide an annual report to Oregon DEQ along with Columbia Resource Company who reports their tonnage on what is actually disposed.

C: We also segregate hazardous waste and this waste goes into a separate landfill and the vast majority of our HHW is latex paint and that goes to recycling.

C: Water being a problem is so much greater here on this side of the state. In Eastern Oregon, the groundwater is 500 feet or more below the surface plus there are natural clay barriers with very little permeability.

C: One SWAC member mentioned that during the course of the last few years several people have approached her with questions about incineration knowing that she is on the Solid Waste Advisory Commission. Their primary focus was on incineration and using the energy.

V. Other Business:

The next regular SWAC meeting is scheduled for July 3rd just before Independence Day. SWAC agreed to cancel the July meeting. The next meeting is August 7th.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15.

VI. Comments from the Public on non-agenda items

There were no other comments.

