

## **MEETING MINUTES**

### **PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY SOLID WASTE ADVISORY GROUP (SWAG)**

**April 14, 2022**

#### **ATTENDANCE**

##### **SWAG Members:**

**Present:** Richard "Buck" Arvin, Tiziana Bottino, Ned Greene, Will Lintner, Keisha Strand, Jane Wyman

**Absent:** Mark Bonner, Harry Glasgow, James Gestrich, Dave Watjen, Virginia Douglas

**Solid Waste Division Staff:** Monica Gorman, Scott Kleinfeld, Scott MacDonald

**Guests:** None

#### **OPENING**

Mr. MacDonald called the meeting of the Solid Waste Advisory Group to order at 7:00 p.m. via Microsoft Teams.

#### **AGENDA TOPICS**

##### **INTRODUCTIONS**

Mr. MacDonald welcomed everyone to the meeting via Microsoft Teams and confirmed which members were in attendance. No invited guests or visitors were present.

##### **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

A quorum was present, so the draft minutes of the February 10, 2022 SWAG meetings were approved.

##### **OPERATIONAL UPDATES**

###### **Landfill Operations**

Mr. Kleinfeld informed the group that the landfill is experiencing a shortage of staff and has vacant positions that have been difficult to fill: 3 scale operators, 2 heavy equipment operators, and 2 truck drivers. In several attempts to hire additional staff, Mr. Kleinfeld mentioned he'd hired a truck driver and lost him to Fairfax government, citing they just approved a 9% increase in pay. This led to the employee pulling his application with PWC.

Trash is still coming in steadily around 1400-1500 tons daily. Several key projects are progressing despite staff shortages including preparing the site for the new natural gas plant by moving a large amount of asphalt millings. Next the surveyors will come in to survey the area.

Mr. Kleinfeld reached out to Mr. Jamie Woodward about a concern related to odor. Opal Fuels and landfill staff are actively working to keep odors under control.

Mr. Lintner mentioned that he recently drove through Traffic Control at the landfill and was asked by the attendant for his license. Mr. Lintner was surprised that the attendant could see it from seven feet away. Mr. Kleinfeld indicated that if the vehicle does not have a decal, staff are required to ask for a license and they get pretty good at looking at the identification. Ms. Wyman suggested a sign to let patrons know that you won't have to show your identification if you request a decal.

### **Balls Ford Road Operations**

Mr. MacDonald stated the new composting system appears to be working well. Mr. Kleinfeld indicated that the facility was inspected by DEQ on April 13, 2022. DEQ noted litter on the facility perimeter and incoming piles are slightly high. Freestate Farms has been having issues with parts for the screener and keeping up with the screening. Mr. MacDonald stated getting parts for the screener is a supply chain issue. Freestate Farm's grinder was down, which was the reason that the yard waste piles were higher than normal. Mr. MacDonald stated the material coming from Fairfax County is below normal.

### **Recycling Programs**

Mr. MacDonald stated the county now has its fifth glass recycling trailer at Government Center parking lot on the corner of Greatbridge Road and Richter Way, which brings the total to five in the County. There are now over 50 purple bins located in the Northern Virginia, Fredericksburg, and Williamsburg areas. The purple bin idea was a collaboration between Prince William, Fairfax, Arlington, and Alexandria. Since the program started in April 2019, nearly 300,000 pounds of glass has been diverted from the landfill and recycled.

## **PROJECT UPDATES**

### **Draft Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP)**

Mr. MacDonald mentioned the Draft SWMP has been posted on the County website under the rules and regulations page. In addition to the draft plan, there are slides with the background information and a public comment form where people can submit comments. There will be a webinar on April 25, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. that will be recorded. As of today, we have not received any comments. We have informed hauling companies, towns, and HOAs about the webpage. Also, we have ads circulating on the Chamber website to get help get the word out to the business community. Registration is required to attend the webinar. We are looking to going to the board in the late spring to request authorization for a public hearing which will be held in late summer/early fall.

## **Yard Waste Program – Progress to Date**

Mr. MacDonald stated the yard waste program started up again in March 1, 2022. Solid Waste sent out another notice with tax bills reminding residents about the program. We are also released information to local media, community groups, and the County's social media accounts. The County also has its own alerts system that residents can sign up to receive information and a notice went out on that system that the program restarting. Notice also went out to the County Connection and Neighborhood Newsletters.

During the month of March, 208 tons of yard waste come to the Balls Ford facility. During the first two weeks of April, there were 206 tons. The total amount of yard waste diverted from the landfill since the County's yard waste program started is about 1,500 tons. Currently, six out of ten permitted refuse collection companies are actively collecting yard waste and bringing it in to the Balls Ford Road facility. Recently, staff sent violation notices to four collection companies that were not participating in the program and are currently engaged with three of those companies on getting their yard waste programs up and running.

Staff has received a few complaints about different collection companies comingling yard waste with trash and missing yard waste collections. There is not one area in the County where this is happening. Ms. Strand stated in her neighborhood there was a delay in pickup for a little while. She didn't know if it was due to a driver shortage issue, but after a couple of weeks, Patriot Disposal started picking up the yard waste. Mr. Greene stated the program is working pretty good in Montclair. The yard waste is on a different pickup day than the regular trash, the only issue Mr. Greene could see is residents are still using the plastic bags for their yard waste. American Disposal Services is the primary refuse hauler for Montclair. Mr. MacDonald mentioned he was looking forward to seeing a whole year of the program.

## **Sunday Facility Reopening and Division Staffing Impacts**

Ms. Gorman mentioned that both facilities have been closed on Sundays since January 9, 2022, due to staff vacancies. Mr. Kleinfeld stated only half of the heavy equipment operator positions were filled, staff were working a lot of overtime, and Sunday closure helped give staff some relief. We have not been successful in filling positions, but received approval to offer higher salaries consistent with market rate in the region. The original plan was to reopen on Sundays in March, but because the facilities were unstill understaffed, reopening was delayed until April 24, 2022.

The Solid Waste division currently has about 65 full-time employees, and there are 13 vacancies, or a 20% vacancy rate. Public Works has about 202 employees and 34 vacancies, a vacancy rate of about 17%. Ms. Gorman stated that prior to Sunday closure, we were running over 300 hours of overtime per pay period. This has dropped to under 200 hours since we closed on Sundays. Vacancies include an engineer, business analyst, two administrative positions at the landfill, three heavy equipment operators, three roll-off drivers, and three scalehouse operators. Ms. Strand stated that Fairfax County is having the same issue with turn-over rates and employees are leaving at a higher rate than in previous years. Ms. Strand indicated many employees going into the private sector because of reasons including 100% remote work and higher salaries. Mr. Greene asked Ms. Gorman if Solid Waste was in a money crunch for raising salaries? Based on the analyses, how's the county

compensation salaries are comparing for heavy equipment operators across the public and private sectors? Also, do you have enough cash/flexibility to pay employees more? Ms. Gorman stated in terms of salary, the County is not competitive with the private sector largely because the private sector paying large starting bonuses. Everyone is competing for limited staff in both public and private sectors. Mr. Greene asked in addition to salary, does the County compete well with the benefit package? Ms. Gorman stated that younger candidates typically are more motivated by a higher hourly rate and available overtime and older candidates with families will appreciate the County's benefits, which are often better than the private sector.

### **Financial Analysis Project**

Ms. Gorman mentioned the 2004 SWMP had a goal to provide adequate funding for implementing County solid waste management programs. The Draft 2022 SWMP also includes a recommendation to evaluate the adequacy of the Solid Waste User Fee to fund required programs and implement modifications. These recommendations are typical for a Solid Waste Enterprise Fund to provide stability and ensure full cost recovery. The Solid Waste User Fee is around \$70 per family that was adopted by the BOCS at the end of 1998. The fee has not change since being instituted in 1999. Ms. Gorman stated that \$70 in 1999 is about \$120 USD today. The fee has largely been able to fund programs because of population increase, but after 23 years, is no longer sufficient due to inflation, salary increases, capital projects, and other expenses. A June 2020 study by RSM out of McLean Virginia projected a negative fund balance starting in 2024 that would increase thereafter. At the end of 2021, the County retained a consultant, Public Works Solution, tasked with analyzing the Solid Waste Division's current and historical financial data and preparing a fiscal impact/analysis based on current and projected revenues and expenditures. This consultant came up with similar results as RSM regarding a negative fund balance starting in the year 2024. The consultant will complete the final report in a few months, which will include recommendations for fee changes. Mr. Greene asked if the yard waste diversion program will have an overall impact on extending the life of the landfill and how would that impact the study as far as costs are concerned? Ms. Gorman answered we are landfilling about 160,000 tons a year and diverting about 1,500 tons of yard waste, which is too small of a percentage to make much difference. The consultant's model will be fairly conservative in order to ensure good fund management and will be reviewed and variables adjusted on an annual basis, which can include yard waste diversion. Mr. MacDonald stated that a consultant looked at the percentage that yard waste diverted from the landfill shortly after signing a contract with Freestate Farms, and the projection was only about 2 to 3%. Yard waste is estimated to make up about 13 to 14% of the waste stream. Ms. Bottino asked what is the projection of the new fee? Would the \$120 be enough to cover the cost? Ms. Gorman stated the consultant will present a few different fee structures for consideration by the County.

### **Proposed SWAG 2022 Work Plan**

Ms. Gorman asked if there was interest in moving to some in-person meetings. Mr. MacDonald discussed the draft work plan for the SWAG, which was developed as a result of input from the SWAG survey a few months ago. Mr. Greene suggested a presentation on new technologies once a year to see what looks promising and what is new in the industry, information on long-range

planning for the landfill, and other environmental impacts like diverting the creek. Ms. Gorman mentioned she will email out the work plan and please provide any additional topics.

Ms. Gorman asked if the group would like to go in-person meetings? Mr. Arvin preferred in-person but could go either way, Ms. Bottino preferred virtual but is flexible to in-person, Mr. Greene suggested he would like hybrid meeting where people could attend in person and via Teams, Mr. Lintner is flexible and could go either way, Mr. MacDonald preferred conference phones/virtual, Ms. Wyman preferred virtual due to distance but could go either way as she enjoyed being in person, Ms. Strand could go either way as she has Thursday nights off now.

### **SWAG MEMBER GENERAL QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

Ms. Strand asked if the County does any partnering with the schools to teach children about solid waste and the landfill? Mr. MacDonald stated the County did not have an official partnership with the schools but had a robust landfill tour program prior COVID. Mr. Kleinfeld stated the landfill has not been giving tours recently. Ms. Strand ask if teachers can set up the tours? Mr. Kleinfeld stated that teachers typically will call, and we try to accommodate these requests. Ms. Strand asked if there is an age group that would better absorb the information? Mr. Kleinfeld stated kindergarten through third grade are too young to enjoy the tour. Middle schoolers through high school are the ideal ages. Mr. MacDonald stated we also used to do an open house in the fall at our recycles day, and during that event, about 400 to 500 people would participate in landfill tours. However, we have been unable to hold the event since COVID. Mr. Kleinfeld stated the landfill also in the past did a “touch a truck” program in partnership with the libraries, which involved different vendors and groups bringing trucks for the kids to sit in.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. MacDonald adjourned the meeting at 8:12 p.m. The next SWAG meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 9, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. via Microsoft Teams.

**Prince William County  
CY2022 Solid Waste Advisory Group Annual Work Plan**

**1<sup>st</sup> Quarter**

January	February 10, 2022	March
No meeting	Solid Waste Management Plan	No meeting

**2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter**

April 14, 2022	May	June 9, 2022
Financial Analysis Project	No meeting	FY23 Division Budget Review

**3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter**

July	August 11, 2022	September
No meeting	Financial Analysis Report	No meeting

**4<sup>th</sup> Quarter**

October 13, 2022	November	December 8, 2022
Annual Recognition Event Solid Waste Management Plan	No meeting	Annual Recycling Program Update

CY2022 SWAG PRIORITIES

1. Completion of SWMP