

MEETING SUMMARY
METRO SOLID WASTE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SWAC)
Metro Regional Center, Council Chambers
Thursday, December 16, 2010

Members / Alternates Present:

Matt Korot, Chair	Bruce Walker	Michelle Poyourow
Rick Winterhalter	Dave White	Amy Pepper
Susan Millhauser	John Lucini	Paul Ehinger, Alternate
Leslie Kochan (substituting for DEQ rep. Audrey O'Brien)	JoAnn Herrigel	

Members / Alternates Absent:

Theresa Koppang
Adam Winston
Scott Keller

Guests and Metro staff:

Jennifer Erickson, Metro	Maggie Wilson	Jeff Murray, Far West Fibers
Meredith Sorenson, Harvest Pwr.	Dick Springer, WMSWCD	Ray Phelps, Allied Waste
Segeni Mungai	Easton Cross, Allied Waste	Elizabeth Slater
Dean Kampfer, WMO	Holly Stirnkorb, Tabor Consult.	Gina Cubbon, Metro
Arianne Sperry, City of Portland	Greg Moore	

I. Welcome and Review of Agenda.....*Matt Korot*

Mr. Korot briefly previewed the agenda, which would primarily be a continuation of the November meeting, discussing and refining recommendations for food waste recovery.

Minutes were approved with one change suggested by Leslie Kochan (incorporated into the minutes prior to the meeting).

II. Food Waste Recovery Policies Discussion Paper.....*Matt Korot, All*

Since the last meeting, Mr. Korot and staff further refined a possible recommendation based on that meeting's discussion and comments. He suggested discussing whether these refined options (attached) reflect the tone of the last meeting before moving forward.

Is anything missing in the refined version, Mr. Korot queried.

Dave White asked if the "homework" assigned was incorporated into this new version; Mr. Korot explained that the "homework" was to help make sure he understood the comments made at the meeting, and for members to refine their own thoughts coming into this meeting.

Rick Winterhalter commented that he would like to propose discussing options for expanding the capacity of private facilities through means other than requirements that were a focus of last month's meeting.

Mr. Korot began to lead the group through discussion of the attached "Potential Policies" sheet.

Funding

Regarding the first box, “Metro should provide financial assistance to local governments...” John Lucini asked if Metro has the funds to assist local governments. Mr. Korot replied that all funding would come from the Regional System Fee (RSF). If it’s a significant investment (over \$100K), it would be presented to Council as a separate budget item for consideration. If it’s a relatively small amount, it could likely be included in the overall program budget proposed to Council. Bruce Walker commented that partnering with Metro was absolutely crucial for the City of Portland for its business waste reduction programs. Without resources, nothing could have happened. He said that \$100,000 would be about what the City of Portland alone would need, so for the regional organics program to be successful, it would require something more like \$500-\$750,000.

Mr. Winterhalter added that he’d done some basic calculations, as well. If the program had \$1 million, it would be roughly one penny more for the curbside ratepayer or seven cents per cubic yard of garbage service. The environmental benefit, using Metro’s calculator tool, would be about \$6 per ton of organics recycled. The group discussed numbers further. Direct impact to the RSF would be about eight cents per \$100,000 of additional expenditures.

Mr. White questioned whether all jurisdictions even want an organics program. Metro needs to be sure that jurisdictions they’re giving money to actually have a program to use it for, he said. Mr. Korot agreed, but he’s also heard from jurisdictions who’ve said that it’s easier to persuade their elected officials on a program if the money is already in place. That money signals a commitment by Metro.

JoAnn Herrigel agreed with Mr. White, adding that she’d like to see a timeline developed with triggers to show that when, for example, capacity is in place and local governments commit, then Metro would make funding available. If the City of Milwaukie had a program today, for instance, there would be haulers who wouldn’t know where to go.

John Lucini said that if funding is to be provided, local governments need to have program goals in place and clear, defined uses for the funds in order to justify raising the RSF. Mr. Walker agreed it needs to be part of a work plan. He explained that an organics collection program requires a tremendous amount of training for restaurants, etc. because it’s a behavioural change. That training will require staff from the local jurisdictions. The business recycling program is the model for that, and it worked well.

Continuing, Mr. Walker said he’d also like to see a coordinated regional campaign, working together to put out a consistent message. Leslie Kochan agreed. Programs in other parts of the state are working well, but would work much better with a coordinated effort such as Mr. Walker suggested. Mr. White requested information about how much food waste is available and how much the recovery rate will be impacted through the investment of funds being discussed.

Mr. Korot committed to getting the information Mr. White asked for, in addition to the impact on the RSF and curbside rates, and confirming market capacity per Michelle Poyourow’s request. Based on the discussion, Mr. Korot said he will work to frame this policy option as a specific proposal, in hopes of getting to a thumbs-up / thumbs-down action by the group at the next meeting.

Metro Facilities

Mr. Korot moved on to the policy option category concerning Metro facilities, and referred to short-term actions and implications listed on the handout. He said that capacity at Metro Central is going to increase. Metro has already made that commitment. Continuing, he stated that Metro South could accommodate food waste, but only if self-haul or dry waste recovery service was eliminated from the site. Mr. Ehinger explained that relocating either of those would be difficult and would likely include using a facility that may not currently exist near Oregon City, and therefore be further down the timeline. Mr. White agreed,

saying that the implications are much wider than on the surface and just need to be included in the discussion.

Mr. Walker stated that he would not presuppose that Metro would need to develop a new facility. There is enough private capacity in the region to take up the slack if a decision was made to no longer accept dry waste at Metro South. John Lucini, in turn, said that Metro should do the analysis of whether it is food waste or something else that is the key material for Metro facilities to take. Mr. Walker responded that what Portland sees is there is not enough food waste capacity when balanced against efficiency and cost, e.g., Willamette Resources in Wilsonville is simply too far away to directly serve Portland. He added that we are kidding ourselves if we think we will get a lot more capacity in the short term, and that it's an absolute necessity to get more capacity at Metro Central and South, which are already permitted.

Mr. Korot asked that the members think about whether or not Metro should increase its capacity for food waste at Metro South at the expense of another service— that would definitely be a policy issue.

Disposal Ban

Mr. Korot reviewed some key points that came out of the last discussion and asked the group if the refinement shown on the handout is representative of that discussion.

Mr. Winterhalter said that the other two policies push fairly far, so it's premature to talk about a ban yet, though he thinks it may be a good idea. He suggested that the group may want to table the discussion. Ms. Poyourow offered that perhaps announcement of the intent to implement a disposal ban could be one of the triggers that Ms. Herrigel discussed earlier. Mr. Walker suggested that the first sentence of the revised policy should represent a clear and practical step. SWAC would be telling the Metro Council that it should consider a ban, but first local governments and the private sector need to get things lined up. That would send the message so that jurisdictions know what needs to be done in the short term.

Mr. White asked how we got here; recycling succeeded without even a threat of a ban, and said he didn't understand why the discussion was happening at this time – what's different about food waste? There's a sense of urgency regarding food waste, another member responded. Mr. Walker said the region has gone to a mandatory program for the business sector and that a ban would help us to send a clear message to the public. Ms. Kochan supported the value of a ban by noting that organics is still a huge portion of what goes into the landfill and creates significant greenhouse gases. Mr. White replied that he's seeing that providing information about greenhouse gas reductions and other benefits is not enough to persuade local government boards to implement food waste programs.

Mr. Winterhalter commented that regarding no bans being necessary for the recycling program, his jurisdiction has been fighting with a company since 1996 that insists it won't do any recovery until they start getting fined. Bans have a purpose. Mr. Lucini said that the opportunity model for recycling would likely be the same for food waste. Ms. Kochan added that DEQ supports consideration of a ban if the other necessary system elements are in place. Perhaps, Ms. Poyourow said, bans should have been instituted for recycling; maybe recovery rates would have improved much faster. She added that she understands the practical reasons for bans, but has concerns.

Mr. Korot checked with the group that they don't need more information on this issue, and is positioned to finish discussion of food waste recovery at the next meeting.

III. Public Comment on Agenda Item II.....All

Jeff Murray agreed that people don't like bans, and added that it would be embarrassing if a ban deadline came before the infrastructure is in place. Also, it's better to gain program momentum first through willing participation by users. It's too soon to talk about a ban publically.

Ray Phelps opined that there's a need to distinguish between residential and commercial programs. Residential can be top down, but commercial has to be a bottom up process, otherwise the material put out by unwilling generators will be garbage. As a second point, he said to be careful about increasing tip fees because local governments are pushing back on rates. He added that he's convinced that Recology can supply more capacity at Metro Central and that his firm, Allied Waste, could do it at Metro South.

Meredith Sorensen told the group that she attended the Washington Organic Recycling Council (www.compostwashington.org) conference and that the presentations will be online, including one by Thurston County, which is starting its organics program.

Dan Blue stated that the City of Gresham would likely support all three policies and that funds from Metro would definitely help to get approval from his Council and get a program up and running. He agreed that Metro South should be included. He struggles with the idea of a ban, but would like to see bans included in the dialogue, because it could help get food waste out of the system more quickly.

Ariane Sperry said she's worked with other jurisdictions, some of which do mandate. It does increase recovery, but also causes increased contamination, so we would need to be prepared to address that. She added that bringing people on voluntarily is ultimately more effective.

Dean Kampfer commented that he agrees that local governments should have plans in place before being provided with funding and that local government elected officials need to be fully engaged. If comparing requirements of local governments versus bans as policy options, he prefers requirements because they add engagement. He added that contaminants can be a problem, so bringing on more volume isn't a solution if processing doesn't result in good product. Mr. Blue responded that any new program has contamination out of the gate, but continuous feedback and education – whether by bans or opportunity – improve the product. Dean agreed, stating that the quality of material in our region is far superior to that in other regions, but that there's a high cost associated with that outreach.

Mr. Ehinger mentioned that at Metro Central, Recology has achieved a dry waste recovery rate of 38%; at the same time, Allied Waste is reaching the highest levels at Metro South, as well.

Mr. Korot announced that the Metro Council approved a franchise for Columbia Biogas to accept food waste for conversion into energy, as well as compost and liquid fertilizer. It's a very significant step forward for the region's food waste system.

The remaining agenda items were tabled until the next meeting, and the meeting adjourned.

Prepared by:

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