

Marta

Meeting: Regional Waste Advisory Committee (RWAC) Meeting

Date: Thursday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Time: 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Place: Zoom meeting

Purpose: *The purpose of the Regional Waste Advisory Committee is to provide input on certain policies, programs, and projects that implement actions in the 2030 Regional Waste Plan, as well as to provide input on certain legislative and administrative actions that the Metro Council or Chief Operating Officer will consider related to the implementation of the 2030 Regional Waste Plan.*

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### **Members in Attendance:**

Marta McGuire, Metro

Alondra Flores-Aviña, Trash for Peace

Sharetta Butcher, North by Northeast Community Health Center (NxNE)

Jackie Kirouac-Fram, Rebuilding Center

Teresa Gaddy, system user

Christa McDermott, Community Environmental Services, PSU

Audrey O'Brien, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

Beth Vargas Duncan, Oregon Refuse and Recycling Association (ORRA)

Ryan Largura, City of Troutdale

Eben Polk, City of Portland

Andrew Bartlett, City of Hillsboro

Kathy Folsom, Washington County

## **1. CALL TO ORDER & MEETING OVERVIEW**

### **2. Rate Transparency**

*Key points of the presentation included:*

Private transfer station rates are not well understood and impact local government fees and services. The 2030 Regional Waste Plan, goal 14, calls for Metro to advance rates that are reasonable and well-understood. The 2016 Transfer Station Configuration Policy established a process to ensure private transfer stations ensure public benefit. City and County partners have expressed concerns about transfer station rate transparency. Metro is proposing to conduct a cost-of-service study of private industry partners to increase transparency and improve policy setting. Council has requested that the study be designed and reviewed before they decide if and when the study will be performed.

*Member Discussion*

Ms. Folsom, Washington County, reiterated Washington County's support in the design and implementation of this study.

Ms. Vargas Duncan, Oregon Refuse and Recycling Association, shared that private transfer stations submitted a memo to Metro Council expressing their concerns. She shared that Metro subsidized operations with reserves which creates a gap in how Metro compares its costs against private transfer stations' costs. It is anticipated that Metro will begin to charge the full cost of service which will eliminate this gap.

Private transfer stations have requested that time and money not be spent on this study. They are reluctant to share certain types of cost information. They feel Local governments may still

not receive the level of detail they are looking for because the study would be composite. Private transfer stations have also asked for more collaboration with Metro on this issue.

Ms. McDermott asked how the ultimate report will be used. Ms. Stirnkorb replied that the information would be used as a cost baseline for planning. Having a baseline cost could help evaluate the impacts of future policy decisions system-wide. Ms. McDermott shared that as a researcher using composite data is a standard practice to answer clear questions. This form of data seems normal and reasonable.

Mr. Polk, City of Portland, shared that the information from this study would provide more information than what local governments have today. He wanted to acknowledge the private industry's concern about confidentiality and that Metro has put protections in place to address these concerns. There is also state law around rate setting and cost of service studies that protect information. The value of this work is not only to make public and private fees the same but that fees for public service and benefit are justified and overseen. He is supportive of Metro collaborating more with private industry and that regulation is not directly in opposition to collaboration.

### **3. FY24-25 Solid Waste Fees**

*Key points of the presentation included:*

The FY24-25 solid waste fees were adopted on May 2, 2024. The fees fund the budget for the Waste Prevention and Environmental Services. This year's fees were shaped by the recommendations from the Waste Fee Policy Task Force. The recommendations included prioritizing setting fees at the full cost of service and maintaining separate reserves and operating funds for transfer stations and regional system services. The total increase from last year's fees is 11.9%. The rates will fund the full cost of service for the Waste Prevention and Environmental Services department. The estimated cost increase for a residential user will be \$12 per year.

*Member Discussion*

Ms. Butcher, North by Northeast, asked if Metro worked with any businesses that have "sweatshops" and if there would be new clauses in their contract. Ms. McGuire replied that major contracts for staffing are the Recology contracts. There are a variety of parameters about staff and benefits that ensure Recology staff have the same benefits as Metro staff.

Ms. Kirouac-Fram asked if the actual fee has been set. Ms. McGuire replied that yes, these are the fees that have been adopted, but the budget has not been approved yet.

Mr. Polk asked about the \$400,000 subsidy for organics, is that coming out of reserves? Patrick Dennis replied that it was coming out of reserves. Mr. Polk asked for more information about the audit and independent review process. Ms. McGuire explained the service equity audit from 2021 and the audit from this fall on transfer station operating controls. These were called out to share that Metro is always under scrutiny to make sure we are good stewards of public dollars. Every year Metro has an independent review of the methodology of the rate-setting process.

Mr. Bartlett, City of Hillsboro, appreciates the fees being approved earlier in the year. Wants to share that it is still alarming to see fees 50% higher than they were in 2020. It is important to make sure that policy decisions and rate impacts are well understood on the front end of this process.

### **4. Committee Modifications**

*Key points of the presentation included:*

As part of recommendations from the Waste Fee Policy Task Force to increase transparency on the budget and fee process through increased collaboration and information sharing with public, private, non-profit, and community partners the Regional Waste Advisory Committee's scope and membership will be expanded. The committee's scope will include the review and comment on the annual budget and fees for the Waste Prevention and Environmental Services. Membership will expand to include a Metro Council chair and co-chair, a transfer station representative, a material recovery representative, and a reuse organization representative. Metro Council will review and vote on these changes in June 2024.

#### *Member Discussion*

Ms. Flores-Avina asked about what the materials packet meant when it said to consider the Washington County Garbage and Recycling Committee. Ms. Folsom replied that the committee recently increased the amount of community members and decreased industry members. She shared that the change in the committee and new voices are always good.

Mr. Largura asked if the three new positions and the four upcoming vacancies would or would not be filled. Rosalynn Greene replied that all seven positions would be filled in September. He also asked if the committee would be voting more in the future. Ms. McGure replied that currently voting is part of the committee's working agreements.

Ms. McDermott shared that the committee has been expressing that the committee does not feel sure that its recommendations make it to Council, so is supportive of having Councilors chair the committee. She would also hope that Marta remains on the committee because of her knowledge of topics. She also asked how the existing committee could help with that effort.

Ms. Butcher asked when the expiring terms were. Ms. McGuire replied the last meeting would be in August for expiring term members.

Mr. Polk asked what is being brought before Council next week. Ms. McGuire replied that next week would be a work session with this proposal. The committee is in Metro code so the changes will be voted on after deliberation. He also thinks that the committee should have clearer processes for voting. He thinks that these changes seem positive and would ask if they go far enough. He also asked if this is an opportunity to update how the committee functions can we have an annual reflection? Ms. McGuire replied that we will have a "look back, look ahead" in July.

Ms. Vargas Duncan also hopes that Marta remains on the committee because of her knowledge. She also shared that the industry has always supported more diversity in the committee and that her position should potentially be someone that is more "boots on the ground".

All members were supportive of the recommendations.

#### **5. Consideration of meeting minutes**

The April meeting minutes were approved.

#### **6. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

There were no public comments.

#### **Final Remarks**

**MEETING ADJOURNED at 10:30 a.m.**