

## Draft Minutes

Albemarle County Solid Waste Alternatives Advisory Committee

January 13, 2022

Attendance: Christine Hirsh-Putnam, Peggy Gilges, Jesse Warren, Anne Johnson, Teri Kent, Navarre Bartz, Monty Harris, Sage Bradburn, Victoria Walsh, Betsey Soulsby

Liaisons: Donna Stewart, Jim Andrews, Lance Stewart, Elizabeth Jones, Phil McKalips, Shirese Franklin, Isabelle O'Brien

Absent: Margaret Eldridge

### Action Items

- Christine/Peggy to send EJ word doc and pdf for updated Recycling FAQs for County website
- Peggy and Navarre to ensure most recent version of Quick Reference Guide is on County website
- Determine state of recycling in Albemarle public schools. Status of recycling in County buildings currently.
- Jesse and other SWAAC members to continue discussion with County Waste re: glass recycling.
- Christine will communicate with Emily Kilroy and Serena Gruia about messaging on plastic bags.
- SWAAC and liaison members will review guiding documents sent by Christine for discussion at our February meeting, think about goals for this year.

### Old Business

- December minutes were approved.
- Governor's Plastic Waste Prevention Committee did not meet.
- Update on Lowe's garden pot program. We confirmed it is a national program and is a reuse program, not a recycling program.
- Update on Lowe's Charlottesville policy for accepting CFLs. They only accept CFL bulbs. They do not accept any fluorescent tubes. Within the County, locations for safe disposal for the tubes are Batteries Plus Bulbs and RSWA. RSWA only accepts fluorescent tubes on designated Household Hazardous Waste disposal days.

Guest speaker: Jay Zook of GFL Environmental, and colleagues William Dalrymple and John Childress.

- GFL operates as County Waste within Albemarle Co. They service 80% of those residential customers who choose to pay for trash and/or recycling services, including most HOAs. They service about 50% of the commercial market

- They took over van der Linde’s MRF in Troy/Zion’s Crossroads, and now use it as a transfer station. One side of the building is for trash, the other side is for single-stream recyclables.
- They have approximately 16,000 residential recycling customers, primarily City residents, some HOAs, and some rural customers.
- They take in approximately 50/tons/day of single-stream recyclables from our area, which go to Troy, where they are transferred to larger trailers for transportation to the MRF they own in Chester, situated at the Shoosmith landfill.
- The biggest challenge they face is the lingering effect of van der Linde’s “all-in-one-bin” recycling system which many people still confuse with a “single-stream” system. Many people still think it is acceptable to put trash in the bin with recyclable materials.
- A challenge to recycling in our area is that Virginia has low tipping fees at our landfills, making disposal inexpensive. Some residents view this as the most economical choice and therefore do not pay for single-stream recycling service.
- Plastic bags are the biggest problem as a contaminant in their single-stream recycling system. People persist in placing recyclable materials in plastic bags. People need to know that plastic bags that are put in the single-stream bin/system **do not** get recycled. They need to understand that any plastic bags in the curbside recycling bin get entangled in the MRF machinery causing breakdowns and also clog up the sorting screens, so that the machinery fails to sort materials properly.
- The second biggest problem is contamination of recyclable materials due to food waste. Containers need to be empty and clean to maximize their recycling potential in a single-stream system.
- According to Jay, they find markets for about 80% of what is processed at the MRF. About 20% are non-recyclables or ruined/contaminated recyclable materials that must be landfilled.
- County Waste uses an automated arm system to pick up recycling carts and empty them into their trucks. This is not as much of a physical strain on employees so it helps considerably with employee retention, but it also means they do not check bins before they are dumped in the truck. They do have a camera in the hopper, in case of something very inappropriate or dangerous being dumped in the truck. If they find a lot of inappropriate things from a residence, business or HOA coming into the recyclables stream at pick up, they will communicate with the customer to let them know and prevent it in the future.
- Their major focus is on fiber—mixed paper and cardboard. They separate cardboard but all other types of paper are bundled and shipped out where they may be further separated.
- They accept mixed rigid plastic #3-#7 but no Styrofoam. According to Jay #3-#7 plastics represent a relatively small proportion of what they collect. They sometimes need to pay for the trucking expenses to get rid of it. Usually it goes where it is sorted another time.
- They exclusively use brokers to market their materials, which are sold to both domestic and international buyers. They do not know the final disposition or destination of the materials after they are sold.

- They separate #1 and #2 plastics (colored #2 is separated from natural), two grades of aluminum: beverage cans and other, like catfood cans. They separate ferrous metals.
- They try very hard to sell their commercial customers on recycling services with mixed success.
- They handle 250 tons of single-stream/day at the Chester MRF. But Chester is a converted facility of only about 30,000 sq. feet, small compared with a state-of-the-art MRF. They are continuously evaluating the need for a bigger, updated facility.
- Anne said that the FTC is most likely going to institute features of California's new truth in labeling law for recyclables. This law "prohibits the use of the 'chasing arrows' symbol (or any other indication of recyclability) on products or packaging that are not deemed 'recyclable'."
- Regarding the reporting of metrics on the quantity of waste and recycling coming out of Charlottesville and Albemarle, Jay said that to do that would most likely require financial commitment, such as additional personnel to do the tracking. He did not feel larger haulers should be required to undertake this if smaller haulers were not subject to the same requirements, due to the lean operations they have in a competitive hauling market. They feel it needs to be a regional requirement.
- Anne suggested we might be able to get some sort of baseline metrics if we could do some waste and recycling audits, then extrapolate that information by the number of participating households and businesses.
- County Waste services public schools in some areas. We need to find out what the current state of recycling is in our own public school system. Jay agreed that education about recycling can raise the level of consciousness about stewardship of materials more broadly in our community. Jay thinks school custodial contracts must include separation of recyclables and require that recyclable materials not be placed in plastic bags.
- County Waste does not like glass in the single-stream system though Jay said they are still taking it. Glass is very abrasive. Not only does it damage the trucks and sorting equipment, but broken glass can drop out of trucks, leaving glass on roads. Glass that has gone through the MRF is not suitable for recycling and not worth cleaning up, so it is used at Shoosmith as alternative daily cover on the landfill, for road beds at the landfill, and as aggregate in horizontal gas pipe trenches at the landfill.
- Members of the SWAAC (Christine, Jesse, Anne) and County Waste (Jay, William) will have a follow up conversation about how we can get the message out to our community about source-separation as the best way to recycle glass.
- The SWAAC would also like to work with County Waste to communicate with the public to understand the harm of plastic bags as a contaminant in the recycling stream. Would County Waste support education/messaging about the forthcoming plastic bag tax?
- There is some concern that since the Virginia plastic bag tax allows heavier gauge plastic bags to go untaxed, it could lead to a replacement of thin plastic bags with heavier plastic bags rather than a reduction in plastic bags.
- Anne asked Jay about the problem of wet corrugated cardboard contaminating good cardboard in MRFs. County Waste combats the problem by running a "dry line" that is

100% manual labor specifically focused on removing problematic wet cardboard from the stream.

- The tip fee in Virginia is low, making it very inexpensive to dump materials into landfills. The national average tip fee is around \$53/ton; in Virginia the tip fee is in the low to mid \$30s/ton.
- Jay noted that Waste Management has recently made a deal to bring a large amount of waste from New York to Virginia landfills.

#### Planning and Vision Group

- Peggy encouraged SWAAC members to watch the video Navarre sent on deconstruction to salvage useful materials and reduce construction and demolition debris going straight into landfills. Deconstruction is common in countries that don't have space for landfills.
- Peggy and Navarre will research whether incentives for deconstruction exist, where, and whether feasible in Albemarle.

#### Operations Group

- Jesse will pick up with Scott DeFife of GPI about a grant for expansion of glass recycling.
- At the most recent meeting, they discussed how to promote composting education in the schools to go beyond back-of-house composting. Each school could have a custodial champion, a food and nutrition (kitchen) champion, and an academic champion.
- Lindsay Snoddy has been promoted to Director of Building Services for the County.
- Black Bear has delivered compost bins to all schools; Christine will follow up about SWAAC receiving Black Bear's school compost reports automatically when they are generated.
- SWAAC needs to find out what the status of recycling currently is in Albemarle Co. schools.
- Next meeting proposed for noon on 1/28 at the County office building.

#### Outreach, Communication and Education Group

- Christine thinks she may have already prepped a recycling tip that the County could use as a PSA on plastic bags as a contaminant in recycling.
- Peggy and Christine talked with Sage about the value of developing contact with the County's HOAs.
- Betsey has continued to be our recycling ambassador champion.
- The field trip to Trex is scheduled for February 4<sup>th</sup>.

Meeting adjourned 5:35 pm. Next meeting: Thursday, February 10.