



Whatcom County Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting JANUARY 25, 2024

Members Present:

Rodd Pemble	Lisa Friend
Sean O'Neill	Ken Domorod
Brandi Hutton	Mark Stremler
Kevin Renz	Pinky Vargas
Mike McQuarrie	William McCarter

Members Absent:

Staff Present:

Jennifer Hayden
Beth Decker
Erica Littlewood

Others Present:

Audrey Taber, WA Department of Ecology
Priscilla Brotherton, RE Sources
Jenna Deane, Sustainable Connections
Katy Tiernan, Sustainable Connections
Robin, RDS
Troy Lautenbach – Lautenbach Recycling
Beth Chisolm, WSU Extension
Calvin Denhertog, Nooksack Valley Disposal & Recycling

1. Call to Order

The meeting of the Whatcom County SWAC was called to order by Rodd on Thursday, January 25, 2024 at 5:32 p.m.

2. Roll Call, Determination of Quorum, Approval of Minutes, Approval of Agenda, Election of Officers

- Roll call was taken first.
- Quorum was present
- There were no objections to the October minutes as presented. The committee voted and the minutes were approved.
- The agenda is approved.
- Election of Officers
- Lisa nominated Rodd as Chair Brandi seconded. The committee voted and Rod was approved as chair.





- Brandi nominated herself as Vice Chair. Pinky Vargas seconds. The committee voted and Brandi was approved as Vice Chair.

3. Public Comment Period

No public comment

Meeting Topics:

4. Bylaws Amendment

- Jennifer shared about the changes to County Code 2.03. Quorum needs to be more than one half of the total committee positions regardless if they are filled. SWAC has 11 committee positions and 10 filled. Quorum is 5. They need to increase our quorum to be in line with the code. Jennifer changed the language in Bylaw 3b to mirror to the code.
- Lisa asked a question about the staffing of the Solid Waste Division and who is the Solid Waste Manager. She had never been clear that Whatcom County has a Solid Waste Division.
- Jennifer explained how the Solid Waste Division moved from Public Works to the Health Department in 2015 and that she is the Solid Waste Manager in practice not title.
- Changing the Bylaws wording regarding the Solid Waste Manager was discussed and if the language of Solid Waste Manager appears anywhere else.
- Lisa asked about the mention of a Director in Section 8 10.010. and wanted to make sure the legal documents that reference titles, there are people who actually have those titles. Do they change Jennifer's title or change the reference to Environmental Health Coordinator/Supervisor?
- Rodd pointed out that any title changes would have to be discussed internally at the Health Department before we make those kinds of changes. SWAC should postpone that kind of change to the Bylaws.
- Lisa would like this discussion to continue at a later time and wanted to make sure it doesn't get forgotten. Rodd asked that she amend her motion. Lisa said she will withdrawal her suggestions We do need clarity on it sooner rather than later.
- Rodd said we will approve the changes that have been brought to us and ask Jennifer to pursue clarification of the issue of job titles with the Health Department.
- Rodd called for a motion to approve the changes brought forth by Jennifer. Kevin and Sean motioned to approve. Pinky seconded. The committee voted and passed the motion to approve the bylaw changes.
- The committee discussed the vacant board position and potential groups they could reach out to to fill the position.

5. Whatcom County Code 8.10 Revision

- Jennifer said at the last SWAC and she received good feedback on the code revision. She sent it out to the industries that the reporting requirements would affect: SSC, Nooksack, RDS, Republic, Lautenbach to get some feedback. She incorporated the feedback from SWAC and from the groups she contacted. Changed a bit of the reporting requirements, removed the reporting requirement for industrial landfills because they receive that annually and it's not helpful to get that on a quarterly basis. This is a change in section 070.
- Lisa said she was concerned about Section 8 – 10.050 under C.1.G. Yard waste will be deferred till a future update of the code. How long are we deferring the update? It might be something we want to look at again sooner than later.





- Jennifer said once the organic waste management law comes into effect for haulers. It would be an easy plug in for the code as it will be the state requirement.
- Lisa asked who the Director is, as mentioned in the authority and purpose section. Jennifer explained it's the Health Director. Rodd asked if there is a definition for the word Director somewhere else in the code? Jennifer said she would look further into it and Rodd suggested to add in parenthesis - here after director refers to Health Department Director.
- Jennifer said she will start to move it through Council approval if everyone agrees.
- Brandi asked if the quarterly reporting is available for members of SWAC? Jennifer says unless there was a reason for it to be redacted it would be public record. Rodd clarified if there was a customer name it would be redacted.
- Lisa asked how formal the deadlines are? For example, if the 20th of April falls on a Sunday. Jennifer advised that they are not formal. Lisa asked that it is added to say the business day closest to the 20th of those months.
- Rodd asked how the reports are to be submitted it doesn't specify if it should be electronic. Jennifer said she doesn't want paper and can create a form with everyone's input on what would be easiest for that to be tracked and recorded.
- Rodd asked for a motion to approve Jennifer to move forward with the changes to the code. Brandi motioned for approval. Sean seconded the motion. The committee voted and approved Jennifer to implement the changes brought forward to the code revision.

6. Nooksack Valley Disposal Operations Update

- Rodd introduced Calvin Den Hartog from Nooksack Valley Disposal & Recycling
- Calvin introduced the company. They the northern part of the county - Lynden, Everson, Nooksack, Sumas and the areas surrounding those cities. Started in 1975. Their territory is from the outskirts of Blaine and then on a diagonal to the Mt. Baker Hwy in the east side of the county. 9,000-10,000 residential and commercial customers. Provide garbage, recycling, yard waste and food waste. They offer residential organics collection within the city limits of the four cities mentioned. Calvin asked for questions.
- Lisa asked who does the commercial recycling in that area if they only do residential? Calvin clarified that they do the recycling collection but only offer organics collection to residential only.
- Rodd asked if they had received any calls from businesses regarding the new organics bill and needing to set up service. Calvin said that they have not and did receive a map from the Department of Ecology, and it looked like most of the areas were around Bellingham and Ferndale. They haven't received any calls. Jennifer clarified that the requirements are for those businesses only if commercial curbside organic pickup is available. The BOMA, Business Organics Management Area was created by determining which haulers provide that service for commercial customers across the state. Jennifer explained that they sent out a letter to about 200 businesses where that service is offered.
- Jennifer asked with the proposed new code that we have regarding single stream recycling throughout the county, do you have plans to make changes to your recycling? Calvin said they don't have firm plans to change their recycling process yet. They've been discussing with others who have tried single stream recycling and are considering its pros and cons. While it could increase recycling and reduce litter, it would also be costlier for them. The decision will largely depend on the cost implications. They currently use Lautenbach Recycling.





- Rodd asked how the separating of recyclables is different? Calvin explained paper and cardboard is the same. They have a separate bin for tin and aluminum, a separate bin for glass, and a separate bin for plastic. They can provide the bin for plastic or people can use their own bin. Calvin further explained their process of separating recycling and the costs surrounding that process
- Rodd asked if they are color sorting glass? Calvin answered that they have not been color sorting glass for years.
- Jennifer asked if they have anything in the horizon regarding curbside organic pickup? Calvin explained they have done a few pilot projects with schools, immediately after the initial rush and initial monitoring of that, the organics became very contaminated. We have such nice clean product that Green Earth Technologies, where we take it, loves our stuff. They don't want to jeopardize a successful program. They pick up weekly in Lynden and every other week in Everson, Sumas and Nooksack. It's very popular. It started as yard waste and then food was added. We are reluctant to add customers in there, unless businesses are committed to it and keeping it clean. Not saying they would never do it, but right now it's better for them to keep it the way it is.
- Priscilla asked if the trucks are used for both organics and garbage? Calvin answered on Monday they do organics and the rest of the week is garbage. They use the same trucks for both.
- Brandi said she is excited to hear that food waste is part of the program when was food waste added? Calvin said they've been doing it for 10 years. Brandi said when she goes to the website it's just yard waste. Calvin said they've always just called it yard waste but they've done a lot of advertising in bill inserts to let people know they can use it for food waste. They used to not do it in December, January and February; they wanted people to realize they can use of it for all 12 months when they changed to program to 12 months. It was a real way to reduce their garbage that traditional recycling doesn't allow.
- Rodd asked if they have and any issues with contamination with the residential customers? Calvin said no. There is some room for growth as far as customers and their habits as far as using it more for food waste. It's 90-95% grass, branches and clippings, but Green Earth hasn't said that it messes up the stream.
- Rodd asked if it's embedded or elective. Calvin answered that is elective. They have 50% participation, people that have commercial yard care go directly to Green Earth so that takes away a lot of the customers they might have.
- Lisa asked if they were involved in the clean up after the flooding in the Sumas area a few years ago. Calvin said they did quite a bit in Sumas and Everson. The clean-up involved them picking up drop boxes and delivering them to RDS. Someone else was in charge of the excavators and filling the boxes.
- Rodd asked if they had to borrow a truck or drop boxes from them. Calvin answered that they borrowed a truck from RDS. Summer is usually busy for them, so in that sense it happened at a good time. They have 30-yard bins for recycling that were put into service.
- Lisa asked about their documentation for FEMA reimbursement or is that just a normal business expense. Calvin said they billed the city directly and the cities took care of the FEMA reimbursement.
- Rodd explained that doesn't happen that way every time. It hasn't worked that way in other parts of the state, the local companies doing the work. There is often some disconnect, probably depends on who get assigned at FEMA and how they choose to administer the clean-up. What kind of time pressures there are with getting people housed. Lisa mentioned that in the emergency debris management plan there is a contingency by which we can set up contracts in advance just in case of emergencies. Rodd



said the last time they spent a lot of time on that plan was not too long after Oso. They had real life examples to look at to draft the response plan.

- Priscilla said she had a lot of questions for Calvin, she works with schools and reducing food waste, and reducing it before it even happens. She will talk to Calvin more.
- Brandi is curious about the commercial component of the organics collection. She asked if in the next year or the year after that if they will be on the map. Calvin said that there are more bills in the legislature right and if the population requirement goes down to 10,000 in the future then yes, they would be on the map. Jennifer added that the commercial organic pick up is based on if it is available for business, it is not a requirement for the haulers to make it available.
- Mark asked if they worked at the Halverstick site. Calvin said they had some boxes out there, it was after Sumas was done. It was for people who didn't participate in the city. Do you feel that got abused? Calvin said yes, they would get tires, and there wasn't a lot of monitoring there. Jennifer added that there was a debris monitor requirement with FEMA, they would look at the loads and say this looks like debris or it doesn't. They might have taken address but they didn't have a GIS map of the flood area. Rodd said they weren't asking for people to show a utility bill or anything like that. Jennifer agreed they weren't doing that.

7. Disposal of Toxics Feasibility Study

- Jennifer said they are going to be doing a feasibility study to look at the logistics and cost of taking over operations of the Disposal of Toxic (DoT) Facility. The facility has been run by a private contractor or the city of Bellingham since it opened. The contract amount was \$375,000 a year. The bulk of that money comes from a grant from the Department of Ecology and the Solid Waste Fund makes up the rest. The costs have sky rocketed over the past few years.
- She has been in discussion with Clean Earth about why that is happening and recognizing waste management costs are increasing, not a lot of opportunity for hazardous waste disposal - the landfill is filling up and the incinerator is full. Doesn't see the correlation between the cost increase and the amount of waste coming in to the facility. For that and other reasons she is looking at what it would cost to run that facility.
- The feasibility study should be done before the next SWAC. They are considering the addition of the three staff that work there and the oversight of the program. We are looking at cost, labor and other logistics that don't fit under those two categories. They will be reaching out to other hazardous waste facilities. Will be looking at waste streams, both the cost and the amounts. Will be putting together a report at the end of March with a recommendation based on the findings if it would be feasible.
- Rodd asked if they will be considering those positions will be new county positions under whatever labor contract. It seems like \$1,000 dollars isn't a lot of money for 3 full time staff and paying the processing costs. Jennifer said that it's gone from \$375,000, to \$440,00. Then it was \$480,000 last year and now it's \$510,000. They are going to go well beyond the 480,000 for 2023. She needs documentation for these things. The contract ends at the end of next year and there is not an opportunity for extension. If the feasibility study says it's a good idea then they would have a year to prepare or we go out to bid and hopefully get a better deal.
- It was asked if county council knows what the issues are. Jennifer said that when she gets the report back that she can use that data to make a report to the County Council. Jennifer says it's not just the money. It's been difficult to work with this particular company. She's spent too much time managing things and it's gone downhill. The staffing turnover is really high, but to a point where no one knows





how to run the facility. She's said she's spending her time training people who are not county employees how to run that facility.

- Lisa asked if there is any doubt the materials are being handled inappropriately? Jennifer said no and that there is manifesting process. She doesn't think anything is ending up where it shouldn't.
- Lisa asked if there is anything the committee can do to assist her in the process? Jennifer said potentially. The contract said it will be going from February - March. They might reach out to get information. They will be contacting, primarily other hazardous waste facilities.
- William asked if they are taking everything to the same place? Jennifer explained that the different types of hazardous waste are being taken to different disposal sites such as an incinerator, some things are taken to a cement kiln, there is a hazardous waste landfill, acids and bases get neutralized and get sent to waste water treatment. Jennifer explained further that it's always been the same company it's just being bought out by different companies so they are still using the same places. With the company changing so much there is a lack of knowledge on how to run this kind of facility.
- Rodd asked if the contract ends this year? Jennifer said yes it ends in 2024. Rodd asked who owns the property and the building? Jennifer said that it is owned by the County.
- Mike offered their help with the feasibility portion as they price the market for disposals. They are happy to add their expertise.
- Jennifer said that the company running the feasibility report is Maul Foster.
- More offers to help were voiced.
- It was discussed how Skagit Valley runs their facility.
- They discussed the current staff at the facility.

8. Outreach and Education Workplan

- Erica said at the last SWAC people talked about priorities and she was already working on a workplan. She melded the priorities and the workplan she was developing. Erica asked for comments.
- Jennifer said they took everyone's priorities and listed them, ranked them in order of how many people were interested and came up with Erica's workplan.
- Lisa asked for a column about metrics. Erica said that was the what the outcome column is for.
- Lisa added that getting more people to use the disposal of toxics (DoT) facility might not be a real goal. Our goal is to reduce toxics. Jennifer said her goal for DoT more people and smaller loads. People are going regularly and not storing things up. Lisa said she would be appreciated getting actual numbers in there.
- Erica mentioned that she has good partners in the community that she will be working with. Jennifer asked for more comments.
- Lisa took the discussion back to metrics and the composters. Would love to see how much is really being diverted to through those education programs. It's nice that Sustainable Connections and ReSources can give us numbers but how does that relate to an actual diversion. Lisa shared an anecdote regarding her son learning to recycle when he was at school and how it relates to recycling in New York.
- Rodd said some of it is accumulating numbers from groups like Sustainable Connections and ReSources so that information is in one place if someone wants to know what is happening. Make the information more public. Erica added that it is difficult to measure.
- Sean mentioned that it is hard to do when you don't have a baseline.



- Sean shared the City of Bellingham (COB) is thinking about doing a waste characterization study for their internal operations. That will help inform metrics.
- Lisa mentioned that COB did a waste characterization study about 4 years ago. Sean says it will be important to do another study in the future with all the changes that have happened and with the baseline that they have with the new services.
- Rodd expanded on the idea of a county wide study, he estimates 20,000 people that are not on service, hoping that most of them are self-hauling and not burying or burning. Using the transfer stations for the study would capture a lot of that information. They are also less likely to recycle.
- Pinky and Calvin discussed the recycling drop off at Republic and the difficulty of monitoring it after hours.
- William mentioned that their recycling is fairly clean, except for plastics. They are going to change what they accept. Rodd asked if they track through the scale what fraction coming through is household's generation. It would be interesting to see what tonnage comparison are they diverting 10% or 25%. William said he isn't sure if they can do that.
- More discussion was had regarding self-hauling recycling and waste.
- William explained the fees they have established for recycling and waste.

9. City of Bellingham Single Stream Recycling and FoodPlus! Update

- Rodd shared that this week they are delivering the single stream totes to their third neighborhood. Adds 780 households. They are still on track to finish rolling out to Bellingham by the end of 2024.
- They will start talking about rolling out the FoodPlus! Program once that is complete. 35-45% of people are signed up for food recycling. It will be more challenging with the food waste program. Will start about this time next year.
- Have been talking with the City of Ferndale for the single stream roll out. That's the next logical place to move the program.
- It was asked if there is a roll out schedule on line. Rodd said that there is not, they initially thought they would roll it out by neighborhood schedule, but because of population they have challenges with having enough trucks on some days. It is not a linear rollout.
- They are sending a flier with each new toter. The first roll out they sent an email with the flyer and only 50 bounce backs. They are hoping that people are getting the information. They made one new change which is not putting shredded paper in the totes. Trying a more graphic format to communicate. There is a Spanish version online. The flyer will be updated when they go to the next neighborhood.
- Lisa requested a flier at her house sharing an anecdote regarding her housemate. Rodd said the flier does not have a list, but the sorting lists are available on the website.
- Brandi asked if they are telling people what to do with their shredded paper. Rodd answered that they have not, it shouldn't be added to compost.
- Troy mentioned that they will think about an idea for the shredded paper.
- COB will be talking about everything Solid Waste outreach for 2024 including outreach.
- William said he was visiting Western and their composting signage mentioned throwing in number PLA 7 plastic. Brandi explained that Western has their own recycling center and their signage is not consistent across the campus.
- William asked if there is a standard size for the totes. Rodd said that there is a standard size and has more capacity than the using the bins 3 times in a month. Not considering having a range of sizes. Still in the growing pains for what to do with situation of people with excess cardboard boxes, or car



batteries and scrap metal. Working through the issues one by one. Some companies in the state also pick up similar waste but they have a flatbed truck that they send out on an as needed basis. They have gotten a bit of pushback on the size of the toter.

- Rodd shared that the toters are being delivered to the Roosevelt neighborhood this week.
- The increase in cardboard since COVID was discussed.

10. Open Session, Announcements

- Brandi shared that April 1-7 is Food Waste Prevention Week. It's a national campaign. Sustainable Connections will be working with ReSources and WSU Extension. She wants to host a trivia night TBD.
- The national campaign is trying to get entities to register from every state. We are one representative away from being the top state. She suggested the city or county could register if they haven't registered. Rodd said he could have SSC register. Jennifer mentioned that the County is registered.
- Lisa mentioned that in the bylaws that at the end of the meeting there is supposed to be an agenda for the next meeting and a time and place.
- There was discussion that around the next meeting is at the same time and place. The next meeting will be April 25th. Several members mentioned that they will be absent.

8. Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 7:01pm.

CERTIFICATION

Attest: _____
Beth Decker, Coordinator
Whatcom County Health Department

Rodd Pemble, Chair
Whatcom County Solid Waste Advisory Committee

