

DETAILED MEETING NOTES - Final
Blair County Municipal Solid Waste Plan Revision

***Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting #2
and Blair County Board of Commissioners' Meeting***

Date of Meeting: Thursday, August 9, 2012, 4:00 PM
Meeting Location: Altoona Heritage Discovery Center
1421 12th Avenue, Altoona, PA
Meeting #: Blair County SWAC Meeting #2
Attendees: See Attached Sign-in Sheet

Agenda Item 1. Terry Keene from Barton & Loguidice started the meeting. Terry asked everyone to introduce themselves and explain who they represent. Terry also gave a brief summary of what has occurred on the plan revision since the last SWAC meeting.

Agenda Item 2. Terry reminded everyone to sign in and to note their time in and time out, as it can be used toward the planning grant's local match. Terry also requested that attendees keep track of their mileage for these meetings, as that can be used as well toward the local match.

Agenda Item 3. Terry Keene briefly summarized the planning goals that were identified by meeting attendees in SWAC Meeting #1, to be considered in preparing this plan revision. They are:

- 1) Raise the level of performance and efficiency in recycling programs
- 2) More curbside and dropoff recycling programs, and more rural recycling opportunities
- 3) More education efforts to support recycling
- 4) Maintaining the current program services; don't go backward
- 5) Providing bulky and non-traditional waste item disposal options
- 6) Providing financial sustainability for waste and recycling programs, and increasing revenue sources

Terry Keene explained that most SWAC committees developing plan updates these days want to see expanded recycling programs included in their plans. However, the difficulty often comes in how to fund these programs. The financial stability of many recycling programs has been lost due to court rulings that have resulted in the disallowance of collecting administrative fees, which had funded many of these programs. Such is the case in Blair County. Commissioner Diane Meling stated that the County was working off of the funds in the reserve account from previous administrative fee collections, but that even some of those fees had to be returned to the haulers due to recent legal action. The County's administrative fee-funded reserve account is quickly dwindling. There are enough funds to support the County Solid Waste and Recycling Department for perhaps another 6-12 months, and the County has been in discussions with the IRC to perhaps take over some of the County's current solid waste and recycling duties. There is interest

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in transferring some of the remaining reserve funds to the IRC (before they are all expended), as seed money to help get support for the transfer of these programs.

Commissioner Diane Meling stated that the IRC has indicated that they want to take over the County composting operation, and take control of 22 acres of the Buckhorn site, which encompasses the composting site. There was a meeting today that included representatives from the County, the IRC, PADEP, with Plan Consultant Terry Keene, to make sure these proposed changes will not cause issues with PADEP or the plan update. Commissioner Meling explained that there are also nine (9) recyclables dropoff sites that are serviced and maintained by the County, and the question has also been raised as to what happens to those dropoff sites, if the County discontinues its services and the IRC takes over the composting operations. It was suggested at the earlier meeting today that the County organize an informational meeting with all of the municipalities in the County, to inform them of the County's intent on potentially terminating current County programs such as the recyclables dropoff sites. This meeting could serve as both a general notification of the County's intent, and also to see if the municipalities want to pursue alternate funding and operational support options to keep these dropoffs open and available to their residents in the future. This municipality meeting has been tentatively set for September 5, 2012, 6:00 pm, at the Logan Township municipal building. SWAC members are also invited to attend this meeting.

John Frederick said that the IRC has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) that has asked for proposals for collection of recyclable materials from many of the drop-offs, and to suggest possible revenue sharing options. John is awaiting these proposals (to be submitted soon) in order to make the best-informed decisions. Commissioner Meling said that everyone likes recycling, but finding ways to pay for it is another thing. The Commissioners are concerned about the current sites, and what will happen to them, since there is an expense that is no longer being covered by any incoming revenues.

Terry Keene commented that the County, PADEP and the IRC would like the feedback from the SWAC on these topics, since the longtime viability of the dropoffs is at risk. Claudia Montero, a private citizen on the SWAC, said she doesn't live in a municipality where curbside recycling is mandated, so if the recyclables dropoffs go away, her recycling will instead go into the garbage. She asked if there was a way to mandate the haulers to do recycling. Terry Keene stated that the County could mandate County-wide recycling by ordinance; he said that municipalities can also require their residents and businesses to recycle; any haulers that service customers in the municipality could also be required to also offer curbside recycling services to residents (along with garbage pickup) if the resident or business requests it. Terry Stacy stated that Antis Township, Snyder Township and Blair Township have an ordinance which states that, if the resident chooses to recycle, the hauler is required to handle it appropriately.

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John Frederick commented that when B&L conducted its municipal waste and recycling surveys (preliminary results posted on the Project webpage), there were some municipalities that did not participate/ didn't make the time to do it, and that concerns him. He's not talking about the small townships that have few paid employees; he's talking about even some of the larger ones. He feels it speaks volumes, and says they don't care or they don't know.

Alan Overdorff from the County Solid Waste and Recycling Department asked John Frederick if he would work with some of the municipalities who don't know. John Frederick said that's what he hopes will happen. Donna Fisher from The Conservation District said she feels that some of the smaller municipalities would like help to make things happen in their townships.

The County currently receives Act 101 Section 903 recycling coordinator grant funding (pays up to half of the coordinator's time), and with that support, they have a Recycling Coordinator that performs required County recycling functions. This position would be transferred to the IRC under this transition of services. The County also receives Section 904 performance grant funding (based on County recycling performance) which may transfer to the entity(ies) running the dropoff sites, if they continue in the future.

Terry Keene explained that key requirement of the Plan Revision is that the County is required to secure adequate landfill capacity for the next 10 years of Blair County's municipal waste disposal. The Solicitation of Interest (SOI) process will be used by the Consultant to secure this waste capacity. The current landfill disposal contracts for Blair County expire at the end of June of 2013. The current contacted disposal sites are listed in the 2002 Solid Waste Plan. John Lundsted of PADEP said that also, PA has sets a goal of 35% recycling in the Commonwealth, and county solid waste plans are to look at ways to try to attain this goal. This percentage is computed based on tons of recyclables diverted from disposal. Terry Keene explained to everyone that these numbers can fluctuate, because long ago food and beverage containers were comprised primarily of heavy glass and metals, and now many of these containers are made of lighter plastic, which may bring the tonnages of recyclables down even when more recycling is actually being done. John Frederick said that there is a lot of recycling out there that could still be captured. John Lundsted stated that there has been less trash generated as well, which has affected both the tonnages of waste disposed and materials recycled. There was a discussion on the reduction in garbage and recycling due to the recession over the past five (5) years.

Terry Keene feels we need to document in the plan the issue we're having right now with the potential loss of dropoff sites, and the impact on the recycling rate. The Commissioners asked if PADEP can reduce the goal, and John Lundsted feels that the SWAC hasn't flushed out all the options yet. John Lundsted said it was the legislature

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that set that 35% recycling goal. John Frederick recalled that it wasn't based on a push by PADEP; it was more legislative in origin. John Lundsted stated that to try to attain the Act 101 goals, the County's programs would have to be supported, more outreach would have to be done, and similar efforts. John is aware of the potential drop in the County's recycling rate through the termination of some County programs, and this needs to be documented in the plan, whatever that impact is. The 35% is a goal, not a mandate. Ashley Duncan stated, after reviewing the County's ReTRAC recycling reports to PADEP, the percentage of recycling for 2011 was 20% (but there may have been some misreporting in the 2011 data), and in 2010 it was 30%.

Terry Keene asked the SWAC how they want to move forward. The Commissioners said they will keep the SWAC Committee advised of the results of the September 5th meeting with the other municipalities, and as details are further developed.

John Frederick feels there is a "disconnect" on what the residents desire and what the elected officials perceive as important. He feels obligated to make that observation. John continued by saying, if left to the elected officials, it will be hard for change. He's interested in seeing a grassroots enthusiasm about recycling. Tim Brown of Logan Township said if the residents are going to be charged, it won't be important enough to them. Tim recommended that residents could contact their elected officials to state their opinion and maybe bring more awareness. Katrina Pope of the IRC staff expressed that outside the IRC, there are a handful of haulers that offer recycling without additional fees.

Jim Steiner, a current and former member of the SWAC who also worked on the previous County Solid Waste Plan, said one of the first initiatives the last plan had was to find ways to get recycling in the County to 35%. He said one of the ideas was to work with the schools to teach the kids, and in turn they would get the parents to recycle as well. With that education, we may get our percentages back or close to that 35%. Jim said that for the most part, most of the population wants to recycle. Terry Keene stated that education is the most important factor in increasing recycling.

Mike Union said he knows the County's funds are running low, and asked how much time is left of funds if there was no new source of funding identified. Commissioner Meling said 6 months to 1 yr. Terry Stacey agreed, when including accounts receivable to the County. Commissioner Meling said the goal was to transition services soon, to ensure a nest egg for them to get started. The Commissioner said the tentative goal was originally to have this done by October, but it looks like it will be by the end of the year.

Alan Overdorff asked about electronics recycling and if that is included in the computed recycling percentage. John Lundsted stated that there are many, many items that are included in the computed recycling percentage, and it's all up to the County Recycling

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Coordinator to report it (in Re-TRAC). John Lundsted announced that by the beginning of next year, computers, electronics, etc., would no longer be allowed in the landfills.

John Frederick stated that the inconsistencies in recycling data in Re-TRAC over that past several years look like they come from the scrap metals side. However, the overall recycling trend in Blair County is slowly going upward. Jim Steiner asked if we had a buy-in from the business community or not, and what the impacts of dropping County recycling programs were going to be for businesses within the County. John Frederick stated that he feels the business recycling environment is very much like the residential recycling environment. Terry Stacy asked Jim to clarify his question. Jim's question was to find out if businesses would be imposed a fee. Katrina Pope said businesses inside the IRC are mandated to recycle. Outside the IRC, it's based upon the ordinances imposed. Terry Keene noted that actual recycling businesses in the County (that take and process the County's recyclables) could be affected by the loss of County dropoff programs and a drop in collected materials. Alan Overdorff said educating the businesses is very important as well.

Terry Keene thanked the County Commissioners for taking the time to attend the SWAC meeting and discuss the recycling issues with the committee.

Agenda Item 4 - Update. There is now a project webpage set up. Terry explained what that website was, and what is listed and shown on the website. He asked everyone to visit the site and provide any feedback.

Terry Keene asked if there are any additional SWAC member goals (other than those summarized earlier) that should be considered in the Plan Update. Larry Carter commented to add the goal "Continue encouraging recycling countywide, municipality by municipality." John Frederick stated that he would advocate putting something in the plan to offer some incentive or requirement to make recycling happen. John wonders if there is some way to compromise. His suggestion is to maybe set a goal of having ten (10) non-mandated municipalities require their haulers to pick up recyclables as part of their services, and start from there. Terry Keene asked if there was a possibility to bring this up at the scheduled municipality meeting in September, and John stated that we could if we put forth the effort in hopes to get some support. He also feels it would be a great victory if we can get municipalities to allow burning only one day per week. John Lundsted stated that if you don't get people to step up and demand recycling services, the Commissioners and municipalities may not move on this. Terry Keene said what he hears from this group is to try to find a way to have municipalities offer some improvements or support to their current (if any) recycling programs. Terry asked if there is anything we haven't discussed yet on this topic. There was no response.

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Agenda Item 6. Terry handed out a revised project completion schedule, and told everyone that it is on the project website as well. Terry highlighted a few schedule items.

- B&L had been in discussions with PADEP for most of the last half of 2011 to confirm eligibility of its work for reimbursement under the 901 planning grant. As a result, B&L and PADEP reached agreement in late 2011 that the Consultant's work (approximately 99%) should be eligible for reimbursement as part of this plan. The grant covers up to 80% of the plan's cost; the remainder is funded through local monies and in-kind services.
- Municipality, Waste Hauler, Wastewater Treatment Plant, and Infectious/Chemotherapeutic waste generator/transporter surveys were sent out in April, and now, after months of followup calls, are generally 99% complete. The preliminary results are on the website. Narrative summaries are now being prepared.
- Substantial Plan Revision - DEP has determined this is a "substantial" municipal waste plan revision, because there is a possibility of eliminating recycling programs (dropoff). Because of this determination, it requires a 9-10 month plan public comment/ approval/ municipal ratification process.
- Review Target dates – the beginning of February 2013 is anticipated date for a public hearing on the final draft plan update. At the end of the public comment period, the month of March will be used to review responses and revise the plan as needed. By the end of April, action will be taken by the County to adopt the plan. In August 2013, it is anticipated that municipal plan ratifications will be complete, and the final plan will be submitted to PADEP for their approval.
- A key component of the plan update is to secure future waste disposal capacity. Terry Keene hopes to have an RFP drafted (the SOI) and out on the streets within a month or so.

Mike Union asked Terry Keene if these requests will be to the same group that we used the last time. Terry said we are required to advertise it. Notices will also be sent to everyone the County has current contracts with, and others who are not a part of the current plan. Mike's concern is that he's heard that some groups don't want to commit to that capacity, and asked Terry if he's seen this before. Terry Keene said that he doesn't anticipate that happening, in his experience. He also stated that the plan is flexible, and additional facilities can be added to the plan once it is finalized.

Donna Gority asked if there was a consideration in building an administrative fee and directing the waste to certain places. Terry Keene provided some history to the group on directing waste. Terry said he would have to look at the legal exposure first before it could be up for discussion for the plan.

Terry reviewed upcoming SWAC meeting dates with the group:

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- Thursday, September 13, 2012 (4:00 pm; location TBD) - to present/ review the first draft of the plan documents – **Later determined to be held at the Altoona Heritage Discovery Center**
- Tuesday, October 23, 2012 (4:00 pm; location TBD) - to review SOI results and recommendations from the Consultant – **Later determined to be held at the Altoona Heritage Discovery Center**
- Thursday, November 29, 2012 (4:00 pm; location TBD) - to review the final draft plan (prior to release of the draft plan update for public comment in December) – **Later determined to be held at the Altoona Heritage Discovery Center**
- Late March/early April – review public comments and responses with the SWAC, and SWAC recommendation to the County Commissioners to adopt the Plan Update

Agenda Item 7. There is a draft SOI document, and it has all the information needed from the disposal sites. It will also have attached, the new draft disposal contract. The SOI should be ready for release by the last week in August 2012. There will be a letter sent to the disposal sites in the region notifying them of the availability of the SOI. Terry explained that transfer stations handling Blair County's municipal waste will also have requirements in this SOI. Mike Union asked if we can ask for free disposal capacity, and if Terry had any experience with that. Terry said in another recent plan, he included a similar request, and all responding facilities said they would offer free disposal capacity to support public, non-profit dump cleanup events. This will be included in this SOI.

John Frederick said there should perhaps be a connection between offering free disposal in a location and requiring mandatory garbage collection in that municipality. John Lundsted said it's not a bad idea. John feels that anything that can be done is helpful. Terry said it's worth putting in there and to get feedback and ways to support it.

Agenda Item 8. The most recent survey results will be summarized and uploaded to the website as soon as they are formatted for ease of viewing. Terry reviewed some of the results that were received from the surveys.

Agenda Item 9. It was voted and seconded not to have a Chairman and/or Vice Chairman for this SWAC committee.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Johnson
EfficientC