

**Public Comment Summary on
The Blair County Solid Waste Management Plan Update**
Conducted by the Intermunicipal Relations Committee on behalf of the County of Blair
September 2013

Requests for Public Comment and Responses

Altoona Mirror Public Notice and
E-mail Notice to Important Stakeholders
June 2013

A public notice ad was placed in the *Altoona Mirror* following the finalization of the draft plan, requesting comments from the general public on the plan. Additionally, the note below was sent to everyone that we could identify as stakeholders in the plan update process. These notices included mention of the plan update to the waste and recycling haulers at their regular Spring 2013 hauler meeting. A press release was also drafted and distributed and the plan update received mention by several local news outlets. The plan was also the subject of the IRC's Executive Director's biweekly environmental column in the *Altoona Mirror*.

A draft of the Blair County Municipal Waste Management Plan Update was recently completed for the Blair County Commissioners in coordination with the IRC, the Blair County Solid Waste Advisory Committee and Barton & Loguidice, the Project Consultant. The Draft Plan attempts to:

- *Provide for adequate waste disposal capacity for the next decade*
- *Describe plans to continue utilization of current recycling infrastructure*
- *Describe the future actions, initiatives and proposed strategies to enhance recycling/waste reduction measures in the County*
- *Make recommendations and provide resources for municipalities to improve their waste management practices and establish new, or enhance existing, recycling and composting efforts.*

A 90-day Public Comment Period on the Draft Plan began on May 27, 2013. During this three month period, comments will be welcomed from residents, businesses, institutions, organizations and local governments located within the County.

A Public Hearing will be held on June 11th at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers of the City of Altoona at 1320 Washington Avenue. The meeting was intended to accept questions and comments from interested parties, and to present a brief summary of the Draft Plan. This hearing is open to all interested parties. Residents can also review the summary or the Draft Plan at IRC Office located in City Hall at 1301 – 12th Street, Altoona or on-line at ircenvironment.org. There are three ways to provide input to the plan:

- *Provide written comment directly to the IRC Recycling Office, 1301 – 12th Street, Suite 8, Altoona, PA 16601.*
- *Submit e-mail comments via jfrederick@ircenvironment.org.*
- *Testify at the public meeting at 7:00 p.m. at the Altoona City Council Chambers at 1320 Washington Avenue, Altoona.*

For more information or questions please call [814-942-7472](tel:814-942-7472), visit ircenvironment.org, or email jfrederick@ircenvironment.org.

Formal Responses

Formal electronic responses came from two people as a result of these notices.

On Fri, Jun 7, 2013 at 6:48 PM, Bill Anderson <bjuniata@verizon.net> wrote:

Katrina,

The LJRA is concerned only if proposed landfills, recycling centers, or transfer facilities are not secure from leakage/run-off into any of our Little Juniata watershed streams or ground water supplies. As you know, there many nasty-fish killing substances that find their way into the solid waste stream. Every effort must be made to keep them permanently contained.

*Bill Anderson
President
Little Juniata River Association*

On Mon, Jun 10, 2013 at 4:27 PM, Katrina Pope <kpope@ircenvironment.org> wrote:

Bill,

Below is the response for your concern regarding the waste plan update. All of the disposal sites are state permitted and regulated, so they should not have leakage or run-off. Thank you for your quick response and please let me know if you have any other concerns.

*Thanks!
Katrina Pope
Education and Enforcement Coordinator
Intermunicipal Relations Committee
1301 - 12th Street, Suite 8
Altoona, PA 16601
Ph. [814-942-7472](tel:814-942-7472)
Fax [814-949-2411](tel:814-949-2411)*

On Sat, Jun 8, 2013 at 12:41 AM, an anonymous commenter wrote:

To: J. Frederick

As a home-owner, I recycle any and all designated items including composting.

I live on Broad Ave which was predominantly owner-occupied until about five years ago. I walk in my neighbourhood and observe the use of recycling bins. My findings are predictable: the apartment buildings and houses that are rental properties (NOT owner-occupied) do NOT seem to be properly using recycling bins. In one instance, there is an apartment building with a minimum of 6 apartments and there is only ONE recycling bin put out with garbage cans -- and it is usually filled with car parts, pizza/food cartons, etc.

As a property owner, I really try to keep the appearance of my property (on a very fixed income) well-maintained: grass cut, debris picked up, etc. It's not difficult!!! As stated above, I make a personal effort to keep garbage to a minimum by recycling yard waste, separated items are taken weekly to Margaret Ave. facility if necessary, and composting.

I resent the burden on City property owners who must endure increase taxes, property upkeep, and garbage collection. With the majority of county properties being rentals, why are these apartment dwellers not made to pay monthly fees to "match" our taxes' increases for City services (emergency services, city maintenance, etc.)???? Many of the rental properties I have seen in my walks have broken furniture, mattresses, old appliances sitting around a property. I have too much respect for my living space to allow this to happen around my property (even though removal is a financial burden).

My abbreviated comment (after my comments above) is: why aren't the same standards for property upkeep, recycling, waste removal the same for the landlords/landladies and/or the apartment occupants as they are for property owners???

I do NOTTTTTTT want my name, address, or any other form of identification used during your meeting on June 11th. Disregard this email if this is not possible.

On September 9, 2013, John Frederick <jfrederick@ircenvironment.org> wrote:

We are in the process of completing our solid waste management plan public comment responses and wanted to formally respond to your note from earlier this summer.

You raise several very good points in your note and there would be value in collectively addressing them. One of the ways that we might address those is to facilitate or provide for convenient and affordable waste and recycling services of all kinds. We believe that the recommendations in our plan provide for that.

As to responsibility for upkeep and maintenance of all sorts by both businesses and residents, the mandated recycling municipalities do place considerable responsibility on the shoulders of the occupants and frequently take legal action against them. As renters frequently come and go, owners must be ultimately held responsible to make sure waste service is in place and accumulation of waste is addressed after an occupant vacates a property. Much of this enforcement is a municipal duty but we hope the plan will encourage all the municipalities in the county to pay attention to these challenges and do something substantive to address them.

*John Frederick
Executive Director
Intermunicipal Relations Committee COG
1301 - 12th Street
Altoona, PA 16601
jfrederick@ircenvironment.org
[814-942-7472](tel:814-942-7472)*

The Blair County Planning Commission also submitted a letter supporting the plan and noting the importance of assuring disposal capacity and maximizing our recycling and composting efforts.

Minutes Solid Waste Plan Public Hearing

June 11, 2013

City of Altoona Council Chambers
1320 Washington Avenue, Altoona, PA 16601
7:00 p.m.

Those in Attendance

Mark Geis	Altoona City Council	Ted Beam	Blair County Commissioner
Donna Gority	SWAC Member	Terry Stacey	SWAC Member
Richard Sutter	Sutter and Associates	Terry Keene	Barton and Loguidice
John Frederick	IRC Executive Director	Katrina Pope	IRC Education Coordinbator

Consultants, Blair County Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) members, residents, and elected officials attended the meeting. John Frederick started the meeting by explaining that DEP is paying 80% of the funding for the project, and Blair County is paying the remaining 20%. He thanked those in attendance for participating and began the plan summary presentation. Terry Keene gave an update on the Solicitation of Interest (SOI) for Disposal Sites including the process and the outcome. The contracts for the disposal sites have all been executed and signed contracts have been received by the County.

Public Comment and Questions

Richard Sutter of Richard C. Sutter and Associates, whose firm had worked on earlier plan updates, had several questions regarding the plan. He asked if the SWAC, Solid Waste Advisory Committee, had looked at the remaining capacity for each of the contracted landfills.

Terry Keene, responded that the contracts require capacity commitments for the first five years. The disposal sites have signed 5-year contracts with a renewal clause for a second 5-year term. The signed contracts reserve the option for the County to pursue and sign new contracts for disposal at anytime with new facilities.

Mr. Sutter asked if the early plan had been reviewed by all of the municipalities and what the SWAC's relationship was with the municipalities regarding adoption of the plan. John Frederick responded that all of the municipalities had been sent a hard copy and electronic summary of the plan for their review. They have been notified that full copies are available at the IRC office in City Hall or at ircenvironment.org, in addition to Barton & Loguidice's website.

Mr. Sutter asked if there would be any requirements for municipalities. John stated that the SWAC had decided to go with recommendations instead of requirements on many of the issues. The SWAC did require that all municipalities ban the burning of recyclables. Terry Keene added that DEP considers this a substantial plan update because of the changes to the IRC and County responsibilities. Since this will be a substantial plan update, there will be a 90-day ratification period during which each municipality will have to ratify the plan before County approval. This is in addition to the 90 day public comment period.

Mr. Sutter asked if the SWAC had involved the Blair County Planning Commission, BCPC. He was asking because the BCPC would consider solid waste as a utility. Terry Keene stated that a notice had been sent to the BCPC asking for their input throughout the process. The BCPC will also have the ability to make recommendations or submit questions during the public comment period.

John Frederick asked if there were any other comments or questions regarding the plan but there were no additional comments from the audience. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.