

**APPROVED MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
HAMILTON COUNTY RECYCLING AND SOLID WASTE DISTRICT
POLICY COMMITTEE**

DATE: July 15, 2020

TIME: 1:30 p.m.

PLACE: Virtual Meeting using Zoom

PRESENT: **Policy Committee Members**

Lexi Born, Student Representative
Tony DiPuccio, Generator Representative, Chair
Bob Gedert, Public Member, Vice Chair
Karen Hurley, General Interest Member
Greg Kesterman, Hamilton County Public Health Representative
Sue Magness, Largest Municipality Representative
Victoria Parks, Hamilton County Commissioner
Raj Rajagopal, Township Representative
Larry Riddle, Rumpke

Staff

Michelle Balz, Solid Waste Manager
Mary Copenbaker, Business Specialist
Brad Johnson, Director
Ali Khodadad, Operations Manager
Jenny Lohmann, Community Outreach Coordinator
Brad Miller, Assistant Director
Cher Mohring, Community Outreach Coordinator
Susan Schumacher, Assistant Solid Waste Specialist, Clerk

Others in Attendance

Chuck DeJonckheere, Hamilton County Public Health
Katie Evans, Best Way Disposal
Matt Hittle, Ohio EPA
Deputy Bryan Peak, Hamilton County Sheriff's Office

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. DiPuccio called the meeting to order at 1:34 pm.

The Committee congratulated Mr. Kesterman on becoming Hamilton County Health Commissioner. Mr. Kesterman gave a few words of thanks and stated that he appreciates the opportunity to serve on this Committee. Mr. Kesterman stated that he looks forward to collaborating with everyone in fulfilling his role.

2. CLERK'S REPORT

A. Approval of Minutes – May 20, 2020 Policy Committee Meeting

Mr. DiPuccio asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes and asked if there were any corrections or additions. Hearing none, Mr. DiPuccio entertained a motion to accept the minutes as submitted. Mr. Rajagopal moved to approve the minutes. Ms. Parks seconded. All in favor and the minutes were approved.

B. Additions to the Agenda

There were no additions to the agenda at this time.

3. DISTRICT REVENUE UPDATES/ANALYSIS

Ms. Balz stated that revenue is down compared to last year by about \$41,000. Ms. Balz stated this decrease may be due to COVID but most of the decrease is out-of-district (\$35,000) so there may be some large projects also that are causing that decline.

Mr. Riddle stated that the volume decrease is due to not having the large projects that Rumpke had last year and it is not in the pipeline this year.

Mr. DiPuccio asked if this needed to be voted on. Ms. Balz stated no.

4. POLICY ITEMS

A. 2021 Solid Waste Plan Update

Ms. Balz stated that the last new plan started in 2018. For members that are new, the state requires solid waste districts write a 15-year solid waste plan every 5 years. Each plan update takes about a year and a half to complete so the next Plan Update will be started in 2021.

Ms. Balz stated that the last time the Plan Update was started, the District was in a much different financial situation; revenue had dropped dramatically so staff decided to write the Plan in-house. The plan ended up being a model for other plans throughout the state and staff is very proud of what was put together.

Ms. Balz stated that it was a lot of work. It takes a lot of from our regular programming time and it needs to be decided if staff will write the plan in-house or if staff will hire a consultant to write that plan.

Ms. Balz stated that it is her recommendation that a consultant be hired in 2021, however, she would like for staff and herself to work closely with that consultant.

Ms. Balz stated that the proposed budget, which is later in the meeting, the Committee will be asked to approve the 2021 budget which includes \$100,000 for the hiring of a consultant. Ms. Balz stated that staff has not issued a Request for Proposals and is not sure how much a consultant will actually cost because it has been about 10 years since the last time this was done.

Mr. DiPuccio gave a brief overview of the Plan and writing/approval process. Mr. Khodadad gave background information regarding revenue and how it affected the planning of the most recent Plan and how it might affect this Plan Update.

Ms. Parks asked about the carry-over balance and why it was so high. Ms. Balz stated that the main reason was higher than expected revenue and gave examples. Mr. DiPuccio briefly discussed how revenue fluctuates and how difficult it is for both Rumpke and the District to predict year to year.

After discussion, the Committee concurred to hire a consultant. Mr. DiPuccio entertained a motion to accept the staff recommendation. Ms. Magness moved approval; Ms. Parks seconded. All in favor and the motion was approved.

B. Environmental Enforcement Program

Ms. Balz stated that this item is also in the 2021 budget. The Environmental Enforcement Program with the Sheriff's office started in April of 2018. A three-year agreement was entered into and expires on March 31, 2021. At the time

of entering into this agreement, the Policy Committee stated that this would be a three-year commitment and evaluate if the partnership should continue or change.

Ms. Balz stated that an amount was included as a placeholder in the budget to continue the program for the next two years, although this may change contingent on Policy Committee discussion today.

Ms. Balz stated that the Committee can choose to go forward with the agreement or can table the decision until September and that placeholder can still be there. If there is some information that would be helpful to the Committee to make that decision, staff can gather that in the next few months.

A question/answer session ensued about how costs were gathered and contract length.

Mr. DiPuccio stated that given this program in the current Plan, he would like to see the program carried through the next two years. Mr. DiPuccio asked the Committee to keep in mind that the citations, prosecutions, etc. is a lot different than a regular traffic violation in that it is not that straightforward. In his perception, it requires a lot more investigation, follow-up, and preparation and gave examples. Mr. DiPuccio stated that some investigations may not go to prosecution but that word is getting around about this program. Mr. DiPuccio stated that there are benefits that don't necessarily show up as a hard number.

Mr. Kesterman stated that in all the complaints that Public Health does; if it is a hundred last year, it is going to be 120 this year and there is really no end in sight but if nothing is done, the problem just gets worse. Mr. Kesterman stated that it compounds on itself and he thinks it is great work and he does not know if it is ever easy to show a return on investment in this type of work.

Ms. Magness stated that there may be different strategies to get where we want to go. Mr. DiPuccio stated that he understood what Ms. Magness is saying but if this program is not in place, it is not like the illegal dumping or complaints are going to go away and someone will need to handle it. Mr. DiPuccio stated that the question is, who ends up handling this and it sounds like it will fall on other departments.

Mr. DiPuccio stated that with this program, it has become a little more centralized and coordinated and gave an example.

Ms. Hurley suggested having some sort of overview (to improve it, to make it more effective, etc.). It should not all fall on Deputy Peak to figure all that out; he needs someone to help him evaluate where his time is spent or isn't.

Ms. Hurley suggested having a future agenda item to focus on that and get input from people that would have reason to have some inputs to give.

Ms. Magness stated that she has always been a strong supporter of this program and wants to make sure he has all the resources he needs and to make good use of his time.

Ms. Balz stated that there is still the Environmental Crimes Taskforce that has not met since COVID-19 started and it might be a good time to reconvene that group.

Mr. DiPuccio stated that he thinks Deputy Peak has indicated in the past that he has worked through some of the challenges and gave examples.

Deputy Peak gave a brief update on program happenings.

Mr. DiPuccio asked for a motion to fund the Environmental Enforcement Program for the next two years. Ms. Parks moved and Mr. Kesterman seconded. All in favor and the motion was approved.

C. 2021 Budget Recommendation

Ms. Balz stated that Attachment C was the 2021 recommended budget. Ms. Balz stated that the 2021 proposed budget totals \$3,714,949.60 (as of July 9, 2020). The proposed 2021 expenditures exceed the projected revenue of \$3.25 million.

Ms. Balz stated that the 2021 proposed budget amount of approximately \$3.71 million is similar to the 2020 budget. Key differences include:

- **\$43,457 increase in Department staffing.** Funds pay for the solid waste portion of an additional full-time Department of Environmental Services Public Relations Coordinator.
- **\$100,000 for Plan Update consultant.** These funds will pay for a consultant to help with the Solid Waste Management Plan Update process.
- **\$35,000 for Solid Waste vehicle.** The District is in need of a larger capacity vehicle.
- **\$50,000 increase for Household Hazardous Waste.** Staff anticipates costs for this program will increase in 2021.
- **\$19,654 increase for Yard Trimmings Drop-Off.** Staff anticipates costs for this program will increase in 2021.
- **\$68,000 increase in advertising.** This increase boosts residential recycling and reducing wasted food advertising by \$20,000 each and increases general promotion of the District's programs by \$18,000.
- **\$40,000 increase in District Outreach Priority of organics.** This includes a \$10,000 increase to the community compost initiative, \$10,000 for reducing wasted food workshops, and a \$20,000 increase to the Waste Reduction Innovation grant.

Ms. Balz stated that if the budget is completely expended, \$464,949 will be drawn from the carry-over balance.

Ms. Balz summarized the narrative, Plan projections versus actual spending, overview of the line items, and a pie chart breakdown.

A brief discussion ensued regarding in person programming due to the pandemic.

Mr. DiPuccio asked for a motion for the 2021 budget as presented. Ms. Hurley moved and Ms. Magness seconded. All were in favor and the motion was approved.

5. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

A. Recognition of Alexandra Born

Ms. Balz stated that this was Lexi's last meeting. Staff mailed Ms. Born of certificate of appreciation for serving on the Committee this past year.

Ms. Balz thanked Ms. Born for all of her participation and stated that she has probably been the most active of the student representatives so far and it has been wonderful having her on the Board. Ms. Balz wished Ms. Born good luck next year with her school.

Ms. Born thanked everyone on the Committee and stated that she learned so much through everyone and thoroughly enjoyed her time. Ms. Born stated that she wished everyone the best of luck in this post COVID future.

Mr. DiPuccio discussed the background of the student representative position. Mr. DiPuccio stated that on behalf of the Board, she gave the Committee two very valuable things: her time and her insights which is exactly the type of participation the Committee was hoping for. Mr. DiPuccio thanked Ms. Born for that.

Mr. Gedert thanked Ms. Born for her time over the past year and encouraged her in her economics studies and stated that there were three legs to the sustainability stool and one of them is economics which is often forgotten. Mr. Gedert briefly discussed sustainability and economics and how they are related.

Mr. DiPuccio stated that the new Student Representative, Elizabeth Ritch, will start in September.

B. Compost Bin Sale Wrap Up

Ms. Balz stated that due to COVID-19, the Compost Bin Sale was very different this year. It was moved to a pre-order only sale. The District partnered with Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District to also offer rain barrels.

Ms. Balz stated that on Saturday, June 27, 2020, people arrived to pick up their purchased material (600 compost bins). Their purchased material was then loaded into their vehicles and briefly discussed the logistics of how this worked. A survey was sent after the sale with 50% responding with 98% giving the sale five stars and a ton of positive comments.

Ms. Balz stated that outside of COVID-19, the District may continue this format.

A brief discussion ensued.

C. Waste Reduction Innovation Grant Overview Update

Ms. Balz stated that two Waste Reduction Innovation Grants have been approved since May. Ms. Balz stated that they are the Sidestreams Foundation and the Corporation of Findlay Market and gave a brief summary of each grant.

A brief question and answer session ensued regarding the grants.

D. Environmental Enforcement Program

Ms. Balz stated that Attachment E showed a graph of the cases investigated this year along with an interactive google map showing the locations of all complaints.

Ms. Magness asked if all the locations on the map have been cleaned up. Ms. Balz stated that sometimes the complaint is one tire on the street; if in the City, the City will pick it up. Ms. Balz turned it over to Deputy Peak for clarification.

Deputy Peak stated it depended on the complaint but the City moves pretty quickly regarding solid waste and as far as if all the locations have been cleaned up, it depended on each situation and gave examples. Deputy Peak stated if the dumping was tires or yard trimmings, calls are made to have it cleaned up.

E. Update of Anaerobic Digestion

Ms. Balz stated that this was requested at the last meeting. Ms. Balz stated that the project in St. Bernard was proceeding well and read what the person at Synthica told her. Ms. Balz stated that she believed they were planning on opening in 2021.

Ms. Magness asked if Ms. Balz knew specifics about when the project would begin accepting waste. Ms. Balz stated that she did not know and that the Synthica person stated that they were on target but thought they would be operational in 2021 and did not know the month.

Ms. Balz stated that the University of Cincinnati reached out to the District last week. University of Cincinnati applied for a grant with the U.S. EPA on anaerobic digestion research with the District providing a letter of support. If the University receives funding for the project, it would start on October 1, 2020.

Ms. Balz stated that their project is more researching and is not an actual anaerobic digester. They will try to demonstrate approaches for increasing anaerobic digestion utilization, develop solutions to barriers, and develop feed stock collection networks.

Ms. Balz stated that the District is going to partner with them and help them with their on-line survey they are planning on conducting if they receive the funding.

Mr. DiPuccio asked if they were asking for funding from the District. Ms. Balz stated no.

6. TENTATIVE FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- **Environmental Enforcement Program** - Ms. Hurley suggested having an overview on suggested ways to improve the program or make it more effective.

7. POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Ms. Magness discussed racial equity with District programs and asked if this could be a future agenda item. She gave examples of when she was the Education Specialist with the District and a focus group she conducted recently in South Cumminsville.

Ms. Magness suggested that the District receive some equity training so staff understands implicit bias and implicit bias that could potentially be happening. Ms. Balz stated that staff had a brainstorming on this topic a few weeks ago and came up with some great ideas but ,one of the items was to make this part of the Plan Update next year which may consist of hiring a third consultant rather than the traditional solid waste consultant.

Ms. Balz stated that the consultant would look at our programming to see how the District could make sure our programming is reaching all of our audience in Hamilton County.

Ms. Balz stated that most of the staff attended the Racial Equity Matters Groundwater Training with the Greater Cincinnati Foundation about racial equity and institutional biases. Staff welcomes any other ideas and training opportunities.

Ms. Balz stated that Mr. Johnson is looking into trainings for everyone in our department.

Ms. Parks stated that tomorrow, the Commissioners will vote on a resolution that declares racism a public health crisis and within this, they are expanding the Office of Diversity Inclusion and Equity. Another staff person will be added that will provide connectivity to impoverished and underrepresented communities to the County and the services that are offered.

Ms. Parks agreed that this is a good thing but there are several things that need to happen and gave an example using the lack of recycling in apartments. Ms. Parks asked to meet with Ms. Balz to further discuss this issue.

Mr. Gedert briefly discussed what was done in Austin, TX regarding the hiring of a consultant to address equity issues and stated that he highly recommends this for the District.

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Ms. Balz stated that Robert Bell was a great help to her and gave an example with the most recent posting for the District's Community Specialist position to receive more diverse applicants.

8. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments at this time.

9. UPCOMING DISTRICT MEETINGS

The next Hamilton County Recycling and Solid Waste Policy Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 16, 2020. The meeting will begin at 1:30 p.m. via Zoom. Meeting information will be sent at a later date.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. DiPuccio asked for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Magness moved; Mr. Gedert seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 2:44 p.m.