

WALLINGFORD REGIONAL SOLID WASTE PROJECT POLICY BOARD

MINUTES OF THE JUNE 12, 2019 MEETING

The Meeting of the Policy Board of the Wallingford Regional Solid Waste Project was held on June 12, 2019. Present at the meeting were: Sean Kimball, Town Manager, Town of Cheshire; Tim Coon, City Manager, City of Meriden; Policy Board Chairman Michael Freda, First Selectman, Town of North Haven; and Mayor William Dickinson, Jr., Town of Wallingford.

Others in attendance were: Mark Bobman, Executive Director; Mary Ruder, Covanta; Ishtua Alicea, UCONN; Robert Norton, Jr., All Waste, and Jared Liu, resident.

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. by Chairman Michael Freda in Room 315, Wallingford Town Hall.

- I. A motion was made by Chairman Freda, seconded by Mayor Dickinson to approve the Minutes of April 16, 2019 WRSWP Policy Board Meeting, and the motion was unanimously approved.

- II. **Covanta Report** – Ms. Ruder reported the operator for the transfer station operations is moving along. She continued, there is still a disposal capacity issue across the entire state. Hartford had shut down a couple days this week due to an ongoing investigation. Nonetheless, their tons are dispersed to Preston, Hartford, and they are sending waste to out-of-state landfills. But, capacity continues to be an issue for the State of Connecticut. Mayor Dickinson Jr. asked Ms. Ruder, if some of the waste from this project is being sent to Preston. Ms. Ruder confirmed Mayor Dickinson Jr. question. Ms. Ruder stated that Bristol no longer has capacity, Lisbon no longer has capacity. She is utilizing Preston and Hartford as much as possible - last week Preston was over loaded. Mr. Bobman asked Ms. Ruder if there are any issues with Hartford. Ms. Ruder said there is some issue. Ms. Ruder continued to say the waste has been heavy these last few weeks, which is typical around this time of year.

Ms. Ruder reported that in April there were 3 hot loads and in May there was only 1. Ms. Ruder continued to say in 2016, DEEP said they will no longer visit sites and evaluate what the radioactive material was. At the time, DEEP said the sites could apply for a radiation detector themselves to identify the material. Sites applied for the devices were given to Preston, Lisbon, and MIRA by DEEP However, DEEP did not provide a device to the Wallingford Transfer Station.

DEEP's current resolution for handling a hot Load is to refuse the load or hire a consultant. Since that happened, the site has been hiring a consultant. For example, if a hot load comes from All Waste, the site lets All Waste know they have a hot load and they must pull the load to the side. Ms. Ruder continued to say, once the hot load gets to a site, the load cannot leave until the radioactive material is identified.

Ms. Ruder continued, 99% of the time, the material is a medical isotope, the consultant comes to the site, they determine the material and the consultant works with the hauler to get the material either removed or sent to a burn plant.

The site has the authority to refuse a load. When there is a hot load, Ms. Ruder has allowed a couple of companies to empty the load on the floor. Radiation Associates removes the radioactive material, he then takes the material to his property to either let the material sit for 30 days depending on the type of material. By accepting a hot load, it blocks a couple of bays off the floor for safety reasons. The truck needs to be unloaded, there are people moving around on the floor. Therefore, Covanta's chooses to refuse the load. When DEEP stated they would no longer visit sites and evaluate what the radioactive material was, a letter was sent out to all the haulers and the board that the site would proceed by refusing to accept a load.

Ms. Ruder continued, if the floor is not busy, she would try her best to allow the hauler to dump and safely remove the material. If the facility does not have the floor space, unfortunately, she will have to refuse the load.

Mayor Dickinson asked the cost of the consultant. Ms. Ruder responded, she believes the cost is \$600. Mayor Dickinson asked, who pays that cost. Ms. Ruder responded, the hauler or the town. Mayor Dickinson asked, what would be the cost of a device to measure radiation. Ms. Ruder responded, \$18,000-\$20,000. Mayor Dickinson asked, if there are savings to pay for that or is there a better mechanism to have the hauler deal with it. Ms. Ruder responded that her company chose not to do it and she is sure there would be savings.

Mr. Kimball asked if the radiation detector device helps identify who exactly is dumping radioactive material. Ms. Ruder responded, no, the device only identifies there is ionizing radiation at the site. Mayor Dickinson asked if there is an advantage of having the capability to identify this. Ms. Ruder responded, an inspector would have to be trained and rely on their knowledge of the different types of material. Ms. Ruder continued, I feel comfortable with Radiation Associates because they know exactly what they are doing.

Mr. Norton stated, the handling of hot loads is an issue for everyone - from a hauler, budgeting, policy board, and municipal perspective.

Mr. Bobman suggests public officials should reach out to providers so they are aware of the financial burdens and the potential health risks that are associated with hot loads linked to medical treatment.

Ms. Ruder reported in April there were 3 violations, 2 of which were recycling found in the loads, greater than 10% - 1 was a mixed origin load. In May, there was 1 violation in which recycling was also found in the load at greater than 10%. A letter was sent to the town, the hauler, and Mr. Bobman.

Ms. Ruder reports that Mr. Bobman agreed to the CPI increase for the residential rate for 2019-2020. That is an increase of \$1.29 per ton from \$67.30 to \$68.59 and no change at the commercial rate - it will stay at \$115.00. Mayor Dickinson asked where are we standing in our tip versus everywhere else in the state. Ms. Ruder responded, very low.

- III. **Executive Director's Report** – Mr. Bobman said coming out of the legislature we have new items pertaining to plastics, plastic bags, Styrofoam™ containers, straws. The bottle bill turned into a study bill. There was a lot of controversy about increasing the deposit, providing funds for the redemption centers. Mr. Bobman said it is his understanding there is a handshake agreement with the beverage companies to begin providing funding for the redemption centers. Many of them have closed because they were unable to continue to operate at the same reimbursement they had for the last 30 years. There was lot of lobbying effort on the part of the distributors, package stores, etc. to limit the impact of various proposals, some of which included liquor bottles, spirits and wine. Mr. Coon asked if there was any action on nip bottles. Mr. Bobman responded, no - that's another item of concern primarily because of litter, and estimates suggest that less than half of all bottles purchased under the deposit program are returned, the remaining half will end up in the recycling bin or in the trash.

Mr. Bobman mentioned that he attended a seminar at Eversource sponsored by the Environmental Business Council (EBC), the topic was emerging contaminants; these are substances that are believed to be carcinogenic or which bioaccumulate and potentially lead to health hazards. They are common throughout the environment, in our homes, in personal care products, cosmetics, clothing, Scotch Guard™, lubricants, and in car washes. The substances being tested are referred to as PFAS and the chemical compound that is ubiquitous in the environment. Mr. Bobman continued, the regulators are starting to look at PFAS in drinking water, surface water, soils, and air. Some of the concentrations are more than 10 times higher than the Department of Public Health drinking water standard which is currently at 70 parts per trillion. EPA is supposed to be issuing guidelines for a maximum contaminate limit that would apply nationwide. In the meantime, states are moving forward and establishing their own limits, some of which are as low as 10 parts per trillion. There's also a lot of complexity associated with sampling and analysis because a limited amount of labs have the capabilities of detecting the chemical compound. In addition, the mythology in regards to testing these substances is complex in itself.

Mr. Bobman continued, these substances are affecting landfills, both open and closed. The toxicology of many of these compounds is ambiguous because not a lot of testing has been done. The whole field is beginning to bloom as more information becomes available. EPA is behind on this topic, but states are advancing with their own approach.

On the topic of tonnage, Mr. Bobman handed out a table showing recent commercial waste activity in excess of 50 tons for the month of May. Mr. Bobman noted this is material coming in from non-policy board towns. He said since the commercial waste tip fee is higher than the member tip fee, presumably this is driven by the desire to increase revenue for the facility. Mr. Kimball asked, what effect does this have on policy board communities, are there adverse or positive effects. Mr. Bobman responded, the positive effect is you want the facility to be profitable so it can continue to operate and he has not heard any complaints about lines or wait times. He continued, it appears they have been able to manage with the increased volume. The down side is increased truck traffic.

Mr. Bobman continued, residential waste is mostly stable and Wallingford is showing an increase of about 5% through the month of May. According to HQ, there has been a lot of activity, especially around Memorial Day Holiday at the Wallingford resident disposal center. Chairman Freda made a closing comment, if you look at the table and listen to what Mr. Bobman was explaining, if there are no adverse effects with lines and delays and the facility can get a higher tipping fee or get a higher incremental tipping fee, he believes that is a good thing.

Mr. Bobman presented an update on recycling; unfortunately he stated the news is not getting any better. Cardboard prices most recently in the trade publications were reported at \$35 USD, which is not a good sign for the recycling business. Previous prices were well over \$100 per ton a year ago. About 2 or 3 years ago, some of the pricing exceeded \$150 per ton. So the \$35 number is a continuation of the erosion of prices for commodities. Mr. Bobman added, mixed paper is now a negative, many of the recyclers are having to pay to get rid of mixed paper. This is all coming about as a result of Southeast Asia curtailing imports from North America. Mr. Bobman recently read about Malaysia starting to return material back to the nation of origin. So the Minister of the Environment has issued a policy statement in regards to halting imports and returning material. Chairman Freda stated as that equates to municipal government, North Haven has put \$100,000 more in the budget starting July 1st, just because of this issue.

Mr. Coon stated, we instituted a program in the City - it is a 3 step program that aims to inform and educate residents if they are caught putting contaminants in the curbside recycling bin; after the 3rd violation, the resident or property owner is fined. This program has a 97% rate of acceptance. In other words, the City has only had to issue fines for 3% of the individuals that are found in violation. Mr. Coon continued, the hauler is able to see that they are compliant. That reduces their contamination rate significantly due to cameras attached to the side arm trucks.

Mr. Bobman added one of the things lacking, and this is a nationwide problem, is education to address the confusion. There was a CNBC video that reported the national average for contamination is 25%. Back in the 90's when we started the program, we (BRRFOC) had a \$3 million grant from DEEP to launch the program. Some of that money

went towards advertising: billboards, television commercials, newsprint ads, radio. This was done to make the public aware of the program and what the policies were. Mr. Bobman continued, we have an entirely new set of policies, and Tim mentioned contamination. So the very low levels of contamination we need to achieve is totally unfamiliar to most of the general population. One of the frustrations Mr. Bobman expressed is trying to work with cities and towns when they do not have a budget for the education campaign. Mr. Coon replied Meriden carved out a small budget for education because it is an important component, and people are like a sponge, they want to know and do the right thing in terms of recycling; Mr. Coon stated he would not see an education program as a drain on resources. Mr. Bobman asked, how would you compare the response on the recycling issue with the MS-4 outreach, and Mr. Coon replied, it is similar, we found that people are aware that trash is an issue and it needs to be dealt with accordingly.

Regarding DEEP Activity, Mr. Bobman stated, one of the items is new legislation that will hopefully implement electronic reporting for cities and towns. All the cities and towns currently are expected to submit an annual municipal recycling report. And if you have a facility then you are submitting quarterly reports and there is redundancy because you do not need both the fourth quarter and the annual report. Mr. Bobman continued, some of the information DEEP is asking for is simply not available to the municipalities.

Unfortunately, a bill that was proposed to improve the reimbursement or revenues for waste to energy facilities from renewal energy credits was struck down. From Mr. Bobman's understanding, the commissioner for the DEEP was instrumental in convincing the legislature that the resource recovery facilities did not need the additional support.

- IV. **WRSWP Reserves** – Mr. Bobman stated the reserve balance is \$2.06 million, with \$20,000 drawn from reserves to pay the consultant.
- V. **Adjourn** - a motion was made by Mr. Kimball, seconded by Mayor Dickinson to adjourn at 9:55 a.m., and the motion was unanimously approved.

Mark H. Bobman

Mark Bobman, Executive Director
June 17, 2019