

Environmental Board Minutes, December 10, 2014

Meeting called to order at 7:03pm

Members Present: Chair Ruth Caputo, Vice-Chair Martha Dahlinger, Catherine Niessink, William Beck, Christin DeJong, Jamie McCarthy, Spencer Welling, David Mayfield, Tim Winslow, Director of Transportation & Utilities Christopher Barnes

Members Absent: Henry Zhou, representative from the student advisory committee.

A motion to approve the November minutes is made by Catherine, seconded by David. Motion passes.

Recycling Discussion with Republic

Jim Porter, General Manager, Southwest Michigan, Republic Services

Bob DeOrsey, Southwest Michigan, Republic Services

Ray Waurio, Public Services Deputy Director, City of Portage

The board went around and introduced themselves.

Kalamazoo and Portage do dual-stream recycling when they started 20-25 years ago and it was a great way to start. Recycling rates did drop though as more people thought it took too much work and lost interest.

Single-stream recycling has developed over the last five years. Three-to-four years ago Portage did a test regarding single-stream recycling to see if it would work. That study and many others have found that single-stream recycling is the preferred method for recycling. The advantage is you get more capacity of goods to recycle and it is also cleaner to have it in a cart since those have lids and keep the recyclables contained.

Single-stream recycling has become the standard across the country. Single-stream MRFs have been developed over the years. Ours currently goes to Elkhart, Indiana. Kent County has their own facility. There are also MRFs in the Chicago area that take some of the recyclables from southwest Michigan as well. It is a very complex system but it does very well with recyclables. Republic is building one in Las Vegas, Nevada that will be the biggest in the nation.

When Buffalo, New York did the switch there was a 25% increase in the recycling rate. That's mainly the average across the nation. There is an increase

in the waste at the end of the process but it is less than 10% of the total volume in the end.

David asks what Republic does to educate people about recycling. Republic's answer is that they send out a flyer with information regarding what can be recycled and what cannot be recycled. Martha asks if we can possibly put that information on the cart itself. Republic does say this is possible. Republic says you have to constantly update people on this so they do not slip and start to throw stuff away.

Republic says they get questions all the time on why they don't have carts like the surrounding townships. Kalamazoo and Portage have dual-stream recycling. Single-stream recycling is more liked, people enjoy having the carts instead of the bins, it is safer since trucks are on the road less, and there is less wear and tear on the roads as well.

The recycling process does cost money. Someone has to pick it up. Someone has to handle and sort it. All of this takes effort and costs money.

Most people over time get used to the process and figure out what they can recycle, what they cannot, etc. Thus, the contamination goes down over time.

Republic can recycle at apartment complexes, condominium complexes, etc. Currently, it is a dual-stream process though and Portage does the apartment complexes on a per-apartment complex basis.

Martha brings up possibly allowing people to have different size containers for some households but this would add cost since Republic would need to have these stored somewhere. There are 95-gallon, 65-gallon, and a few 35-gallon carts. Republic can be flexible if need be.

Bill brings up that we need to simplify things so we recycle more and get things done. We need to not necessarily nitpick every single issue and potentially prevent something small from clouding up the bigger picture.

Tim asks how ideally Republic would recycle. They would do it every two weeks with a single-sized cart. They would prefer the 96-gallon cart since it would be every two weeks. Usually there are not concerns about smell since this isn't trash and there should be no food (ideally) in these containers. It is more efficient that way, safe, etc. Trucks are on the road less often. Currently there are five zones. Ideally Republic would divide up the city into ten days basically. Republic sends out calendars regarding trash/recycling days and also the City of Portage sends out reminders as well.

Republic brings up going with a longer term agreement rather than three years because of the cart expense. A longer term contract would definitely encourage the city to go with a longer term. Most companies ideally look at a 7-10 year contract basically.

The City of Kalamazoo's bid/contract is also up soon and will be having a discussion as well with Republic. The State of Michigan is pushing communities to recycle more and has allocated some money and people to increase their efforts. The City of Portage could possibly look into some potential funding sources if need be.

Republic has a good safety record in the area as well as customer satisfaction record/rating as well in the area.

David asks if there was anything in the bid that is prohibitive to hurting us regarding single-stream recycling? The term of the bid was one of the issues brought up. Bill brings up identifying what is ideal and comparing it to what is feasible.

At the end of this process, the environmental board would bring a recommendation to the board and then the board would vote on it and submit it in writing to city council in memo format.

Chris brings up that recycling is paid for by a dedicated millage. The maximum is 0.5 mills for recycling and we are right there at the moment. With declining property values and expenses being at the same level, this puts us right at the maximum. This is a permanent millage. The length of the contract is also limited by city charter to five years.

Bill brings up if the city were to purchase the containers, how would that affect the term of the recycling contract? There are also some other expenses with the trucks as well that has to be considered. Republic would need to buy new trucks more than likely and these possible could be fueled by natural gas.

Chris asks what a 96-gallon cart costs. Republic says those cost \$45-\$55 roughly.

City Council Report

Ruth is going to send the report to the City Clerk who will pass it on to the City Council.

Parks Board

A new chair and vice-chair have been elected. We will try to find out information regarding the Friends of Austin Lake group that has been created.

Sustainability/GHG Footprint

The Environmental Concerns Committee, which is an advisory board for the City of Kalamazoo, has recently discussed the topic of greenhouse gases. The City of Kalamazoo has partnered with WMU through Brian Petersen, ECC member and Assistant Professor in the Environmental Studies Program at WMU, to conduct a greenhouse gas inventory and determine the carbon footprint for City of Kalamazoo buildings and operations. He had received funding to support one student to work on quantifying greenhouse gas emissions and subsequent carbon footprint for city operations. City staff has provided energy use information that will be used in a model developed by the organization, ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability.

Another aspect of the project he is working on is to obtain employee commuting information that would also be used in the model. He intends to poll city employees using an online survey to get this information. He is hopeful that the survey information will be ready to go out in November. Brian also indicated that he will be making a short presentation to the Kalamazoo City Commission early next year to provide them with an update on the project.

The City of Portage really has no idea what their footprint is either. This might be a substantial commitment from the City of Portage though unless we can potentially get funds from elsewhere.

Chris brings up that southwest Michigan is a non-attainment area with regard to air quality elements. The City of Portage does try to help make this better by adopting traffic patterns that help reduce congestion on certain roads, idling cars, etc. The City of Portage has used some of this money to help meet these requirements. Currently, the City of Portage in this interim time does meet the requirements which could mean a loss of federal money. The City of Portage has not done an analysis of city buildings, etc.

Invasive Species Pulls

Ruth brings up are we going to continue to do these pulls and follow our system. The invasives group will meet after the new year to discuss what we'd like to do next year.

Announcements

Jamie brings up that the Kalamazoo Watershed Council is putting on a one-day water festival event in the near future.

Motion to adjourn made by Spencer, seconded by Tim. Motion passes.

Meeting adjourned at 8:27pm

/s/ Tim Winslow