**FINAL MINUTES**

**PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY**

**SOLID WASTE ADVISORY GROUP (SWAG) MEETING**

**February 10, 2022**

**OPENING**

Mr. Scott MacDonald called the meeting of the Solid Waste Advisory Group to order at 7:00 p.m. via Microsoft Teams.

**ATTENDANCE**

**SWAG Members:**

**Present:** Mr. Richard Arvin, Mr. Mark Bonner, Ms. Tiziana Bottino, Ms. Virginia Douglas, Mr. James Gestrich, Mr. Harry Glasgow, Mr. Ned Greene, Mr. Will Lintner, and Mr. David Watjen

**Absent:** Ms. Keisha Strand, and Ms. Jane Wyman

**Solid Waste Staff:** Ms. Monica Gorman, Mr. Scott Kleinfeld, Mr. Scott MacDonald, Mr. Trent Magill, Mr. Bernie Osilka, and Ms. Amy Zitzmann

**Guests:** Ms. Stacey Demers

**AGENDA TOPICS**

**INTRODUCTIONS**

Mr. MacDonald welcomed everyone to the meeting via Microsoft Teams and confirmed which members were in attendance. No visitors were present. One invited guest, Ms. Stacey Demers, was present.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

A quorum was present, so the draft minutes of the October 21, 2021 and the December 16, 2021 SWAG meetings were approved.

**OPERATIONAL UPDATES**

**Landfill Operations**

Mr. Scott Kleinfeld informed the group that five new heavy equipment operators have been hired and are scheduled to start next month. Otherwise, the landfill is running smoothly and continuing to take in trash as usual.

**Balls Ford Road Operations**

Mr. Bernie Osilka informed the committee that in the month of January, the Balls Ford Road facility took in 1,500 tons of material including 300 tons of food waste. The landfill took in 1,600 tons of brush. These numbers are slightly high due to the recent winter storms, but this increase has not hindered Freestate Farms’ operations. Ms. Monica Gorman mentioned that the Balls Ford Road facility has recently started accepting food waste from Whole Foods stores in the Northern Virginia area.

**Recycling Programs**

Mr. Scott MacDonald stated that the yard waste collection program completed its first quarter as of December 31, 2021. Approximately 1,300 tons of yard waste was brought to Balls Ford Road from the permitted hauling companies. Two thirds of the haulers participated in the program. Solid Waste staff have met with the haulers and expect full participation in March. Currently, staff are planning additional outreach including a yard waste flyer inserted in the real estate tax assessments mailed to property owners. Haulers will also be sent a PDF copy of this flyer to send to their customers. This will help everyone get back on track and pick up where we left off in December. Mr. MacDonald informed the group that this is the reporting time of year, and he is currently working on the annual recycling report and the annual locality recycling rate report. Once finished, these will be sent to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Large scale group outreach activities are still paused due to COVID, but a small-scale event for compost awareness day is being planned in the spring to be held at Balls Ford Road.

**PROJECT UPDATES**

**Draft Solid Waste Management Plan - Revision Review and Vote**

Mr. MacDonald introduced Ms. Stacey Demers from SCS Engineers. Ms. Demers thanked the committee for all their comments regarding their review of the draft Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP). Prince William County is very progressive, and this document showcases all the great resources the county has in the landfill and at Balls Ford Road. Mr. MacDonald stated that this revision of the SWMP started in October 2020. Eight topical areas were worked through at SWAG meetings in groups of ones and twos. With the help of the SWAG, these eight topical areas were transformed into the draft SWMP. Mr. MacDonald briefly explained these changes to the committee. These included editorial changes, tables updated to include 2020 data, and industry acronyms were removed to make the document more readable. Additional content and graphics were added to show the complexity of waste generation. Figures were also adjusted to include 2020 data and show certain recycling changes, such as the removal of #3 through #7 plastics from the recycling stream. Additional information was given to clarify the application of the waste hierarchy pyramid. This was done to better frame the document better and understand the context. Information regarding the yard waste program was updated. More information with respect to the disposal capacity for Phase IV was added. SWAG meeting dates were also updated. The timing of alternative waste conversion was also clarified, along with other minor edits.

Mr. MacDonald asked that the committee approve the SWMP and include the ability for staff to make minor edits. Mr. Will Lintner motioned for the SWMP to be approved and moved on to the next step in the process. Mr. Mark Bonner seconded the motion. Each committee member who was present approved the draft SWMP. The plan will be made available for public comments. Ms. Demers will also produce a more readable summary document for the public, which will also highlight many of the department’s successes. Ms. Tiziana Bottino asked for more information regarding Section 8.1.4 of the SWMP specifically energy production through solar or wind. Why is this topic so abbreviated, as she was under the impression it was a current goal and not a long-term goal? Ms. Gorman answered that for the past year, this goal was being pursued, and still is to some extent. However, things got hung up with NOVEC; where NOVEC was not allowing the landfill to make the connection to return electricity produced to the grid. Ms. Gorman hopes that in the future, NOVEC will change their mind, but staff are also currently working with a consultant conducting research on solar. Ms. Gorman will keep the committee apprised of things as the SWMP moves forward.

**Renewable Natural Gas (RNG) Project**

Mr. Trent Magill informed the committee of the renewable natural gas (RNG) project, slated to start construction at the landfill this year. Starting in the mid-1990s, the Solid Waste Division has been working with a vendor, Fortistar, to manage landfill gas for beneficial reuse. As the trash degrades, it produces gas; with the landfill gas averaging about 50% methane. This gas can be treated many ways. Some landfills burn this gas in an open flare and some use the gas to make electricity. Fortistar has been using the gas to make electricity. This is done in a plant located on the landfill property, using five large engines. To run the engines, the gas must be a certain quality. Not all the gas that comes from the landfill is to that quality; so, the inadequate gas is currently flared off. Thus, we are not using all the gas collected. Fortistar has recently combined with sister companies and is now under the name of Opal Fuels. New technologies and market demands have led them to explore other options for landfill gas. Work is slated to start this year on a renewable natural gas facility on the east side of the landfill property, not far from the existing plant. Ms. Gorman clarified the information for the committee, stating that, Fortistar is currently using landfill gas to run engines that produce electricity. That plant will be decommissioned and instead of producing electrical power, Opal Fuels will produce pipeline quality natural gas that will go to Washington Gas. Mr. Lintner asked how is this process any more renewable than it through the gas engines? Ms. Gorman replied that there will be additional capture of landfill gas. As of now, the landfill is flaring off a good part of the gas because the current system does not use all of the landfill gas collected. There will be very little flared off when we convert to the RNG plant. So, emissions will be reduced, and we will be producing more energy. Mr. Lintner asked if staff believes this will generate more revenue for the County? Ms. Gorman answered yes. This RNG project will bring in significantly more revenue. There is an agreement in place for profit sharing as well. Right now, the revenues collected are in the low hundreds of thousands. The potential revenues with this RNG plant are one million or more annually. Ms. Gorman continued, saying that Opal Fuels is investing in all the capital infrastructure. There are tens of millions of dollars required to create the infrastructure for this plant, which is our partner’s investment. Mr. Lintner continued, asking that once this investment is made, will the County still get as its share of additional revenue changing from electrical generation to producing natural gas? Ms. Gorman answered that when the natural gas plant goes online, there will be a minimum payment to the County that is around $400,000.00 annually and then profit sharing from that point. Ms. Tiziana Bottino would love the County to use that revenue to expand clean energy and reduce emissions. She also asked what happens to the other gases that are removed to make the methane pure? Mr. Magill stated an active carbon bed and media filtration system is used, and this material is nonhazardous and can be disposed of in a landfill. Mr. Magill will send Ms. Bottino more information. Mr. Bonner was very pleased with Mr. Magill’s presentation and is excited to learn more about this RNG project as it moves forward.

**Acquisition of Bockes Property**

Ms. Gorman informed the committee of the recent acquisition of the Bockes property. The County purchased 14202 Van Doren Road, owned by Mr. and Mrs. Bockes, and closed on the property in December 2021. Ms. Gorman provided the committee with some background information. Since the 1960s, the landfill has been the only disposal option available for Prince William County residents. In 1988, the County engaged in countywide landfill siting study. Based on the results of this study, the Board authorized staff to expand the existing landfill footprint by acquiring neighboring properties. The Keys and Bockes properties were the last two remaining parcels to be acquired that were in the original study area. The Bockes property is about 54.6 acres in total. This parcel is needed for planned expansion for the buffer and disposal area. The parcel will improve the geometry of the Phase IV footprint and increase the disposal area by about 27 acres. This equates to about two more years of landfill life. This acquisition has also added about 27 acres to the buffer area.

**SWAG MEMBER GENERAL QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

Mr. James Gestrich brought up that he has noticed an odor that goes beyond just the normal trash smell. It is putrid and almost burns your nose. This started not too long after some work done on Independence Drive. Does staff have any knowledge of a smell or odor that could be coming along with the trash odor? Mr. Kleinfeld replied that staff have been noticing increased odors due to the cold but noting putrid. Mr. Kleinfeld stated that he will reach out to Mr. Gestrich the next morning to get more information. Mr. Gestrich also mentioned that a gentleman drove past his house last week, got of his truck, and started taking pictures of the fire lane past the gate at the end of his driveway headed towards the landfill. He then turned around and took pictures of the rest of his road going out. Is that part of the landfill operations, or is there something else going on? Ms. Gorman is not aware of anything, but there have been some Parks employees looking at the buffer area around the Bockes property for passive park uses. Mr. Kleinfeld mentioned that Dovetail staff (an archaeological surveying company) were recently doing inspections on the wetlands. Mr. Kleinfeld was not notified of anyone else out there taking photos. Mr. Gestrich stated that the park police are setting up their services out in the woods due to the trail and are taking over the legal aspect of protection of people in that area. Mr. Gestrich has informed them that his house is a safe place if they need to run and get help for any reason. Mr. Gestrich extended this invitation to solid waste employees; knowing that there are coyotes and other animals in the area. Mr. Gestrich stated that he noticed an electric car battery placed in the battery area at the landfill. Mr. MacDonald stated that yes, unfortunately these batteries have been appearing for the past year or so. They are very dangerous and should not be accepted, but there are few options for proper disposal at this time. The industry is not equipped to handle the influx of batteries that are expected to require disposal. Mr. Gestrich would like to push for legislation to make it unlawful for landfills to even accept these batteries. Mr. MacDonald stated he would send Mr. Gestrich information in the coming days. Mr. Bonner suggested posting a sign informing the public not to bring in electric car batteries. Finally, Mr. Gestrich praised landfill staff, stating that he has seen a noticeable improvement and staff who are excited about what they do here at the landfill.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. MacDonald adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m. The next SWAG meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 14, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. via Microsoft Teams.