

CITY OF CONCORD
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF DECEMBER 4, 2019

The Concord Energy and Environment Advisory Committee met at 7:00 p.m., on December 4, 2019, in the Second Floor Conference Room, City Hall, 41 Green Street.

EEAC Attendees: Councilor Rob Werner, Councilor Linda Kenison, Jennifer Galbraith, Rich Maher, Kelsey Sullivan, Dot Currier, Matt Thorne

Staff: Sam Durfee

Guests: Reagan Bissonette (Executive Director, [the Northeast Resource Recovery Association](#)), Boyd Smith (resident), Hannah Smith, Meredith Hatfield (Councilor), Catherine Kilday, Donna Reardon, Gail Page, Jessica Forrest (resident, minutes), Bob Eldredge (President of [Residential Energy Performance Association](#), REPA/ ABC Energy Savings)

Agenda

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Municipal Properties Update
 - Contractor Selection Process and Status
- III. Waste Management Issues and Opportunities
 - Reagan Bissonette, Executive Director of the Northeast Resource Recovery Association
 - Portsmouth Single Use Plastics Ban (Municipal Properties and official city events) and SWAC referral to EEAC.
- IV. Strategic Plan Recommended Action Steps/Priorities
 - Implementation of Strategic Plan Action Steps by City
 - Implementation of Strategic Plan Action Steps by EEAC
 - Priority Setting
- V. Municipal Aggregation/Community Power
 - City Staff meeting - January, 2020 (tentative)
- VI. New Business/Announcements

Rob Werner calls meeting to order at 7pm.

Linda moves to approve November minutes. Rich seconds. November minutes unanimously approved.

I. Update on Municipal Properties RFP:

Rob: Finalist companies have been selected for installing solar panels on wastewater treatment plant and landfill. December 16 proposals to come back. Aim is to select contractor by mid-January. Optimism about making a deal

II. Waste Management Issues and Opportunities

Reagan Bissonette, the Executive Director the Northeast Resources Recovery Association ([NRRA](#)), was invited to talk with the group about waste management and recycling issues in New Hampshire. Topics included where state law is and may be going, and what Concord can do in this context to reduce waste to landfill. The Solid Waste Advisory Committee is generally in charge of reviewing waste related issues in Concord, and CEEAC was interested in learning how it could be of more help.

A question from the committee about how Portsmouth banned styrofoam within the context of state law.

Reagan: State law is ambiguous as to whether municipalities can regulate beyond state law.

Background on NRRA and relevant state laws, markets, and practices.

Reagan: The NRRA helps municipalities to build capacity with respect to their recycling programs. They follow recycling markets, and also help them to get the best price for their recycling waste.

China passed a policy in Jan 2018 that it won't import paper, plastics and a few others. China used to purchase half the world's supply, so this is pretty big shift.

State Report on Recycling Streams and Solid Waste Management in NH (Nov. 1, 2019):

A state committee in NH looked into the challenges municipalities are facing with regards to recycling and to provide substantive recommendations. The report was released in November: <https://www.schoolrecycling.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/HB-617-Final-Report-11012019-002.pdf>

The committee was called the "Committee to Study Recycling Streams and Solid Waste Management in New Hampshire." It was composed of 3 reps and 1 senator, 3 democrats and 1 republican. The process was composed of 14-hearings. It was well-received by both parties and we should expect some legislative changes in the next year coming out of it.

NH Waste Management Landscape:

There is a solid waste emergency in NH – and landfills likely to run out of space in the next 15-16 years. Half of waste that goes to NH landfills comes from out-of-state. There are 6 landfills: 3 private, 3 public. NH private landfills can take waste from anywhere. Other states are closing their incinerators, often due to tighter environmental regulations, and sending their waste to NH.

The NH solid waste management bureau hasn't been given the staff and resources it needs to make plans. It was cut 10 years ago. Our state agency still doesn't have the capacity to plan strategically, monitor, or manage our waste.

The committee report proposes a source of revenue to rebuild our waste management capacity, which is a tax or user-fee of \$1 on every ton of waste disposed here from out of state.

Composting. In 2015, there was a law passed requiring the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) to update composting regulations to adopt best practices in composting meat and dairy. In practice, however, leaf and yard waste is banned from landfills-so municipalities often provide services to facilitate composting. However, food waste can be thrown away. It weighs a lot and costs a lot to landfill. New England has the highest waste disposal cost in the country. Here, \$90/ton to dispose of waste on average. This is because of limited land space. Costs are rising over time. If we can compost more food waste, it will cost less.

Relatively few towns offer municipal food waste composting and there are some permitting obstacles to scaling this up.

There are restrictions on composting meat and dairy. If a facility wants to do this, they need a waiver of state regulations.

DES has not been able to update regulations, due to staff capacity.

Problems with landfilling foodwaste:

- Expensive – because food waste is heavy
- Potent generator of methane, a greenhouse gas
- It is wasteful: Food waste should actually go to hungry people, then animals, and finally, to compost. Instead, the vast majority of food waste in U.S. is landfilled

Part of committee recommendations is to not only require DES to update regulations and practices, but a timeline for doing so.

Ex. of loss- Mr. Fox composting on the seacoast of NH accepts meat and dairy, but takes it to Maine to actually compost. Company decided to be based in Maine because regulations weren't favorable. Same in Upper Valley.

Other states around us have best practices. Compost in border areas with Vermont and Maine are being exported. Composting companies can't operate here. Indicated by report as a problem.

Compost Permitting. Reagan did a [webinar](#) in September with NH Food Alliance on the state of current regulations on composting. Provided a [handout](#) documenting the regulations.

Essentially, in NH, individuals can compost their own waste without a permit. Farms aren't allowed to compost the products of others without a permit. Plant waste requires permit-by-notification just saying that you are following regulations.

If a farm or facility wants to compost meat and dairy for others, they need a standard permit. This is difficult to get.

Lewis Farm wants to do a pilot program for meat and dairy composting. Needs to apply for a waiver of the current rules. If DES could update regulations, then it can provide a template to Lewis Farms and others to do this. Much more streamlined.

Why, historically, has there been restrictions on composting meat and dairy? It is safe if certain protocols are followed (re: temperature for number of days)– it has been done for many years in other states. It is considered a best practice. NH wants to update regulations, but to date, there has not been enough capacity within the agency to do so.

Other committee identified issues & recommendations:

- NH established a goal in 1990 that by 2000, 40% of waste would be diverted. We didn't meet the goal, but we didn't even know by how much. This is because there was no data and measurements on how much is diverted. Recommendation by HB 617 committee is a) New goal to reduce the amount of total waste by 40%, and b) establish a new metric to measure reduced waste produced as a state.
- Funding \$1/ton charge for out of state waste to NH landfills.
- DES / Solid Waste Management needs more funding to increase staffing and move to a system of strategic, planned management. Right now, they are doing reactive management based on low funding.

Many bills will be sent to the legislature in the next session as a result of the committee report that should have strong bipartisan support.

Recycling

For Concord, challenge when contract with Casella comes up for renewal.

(Concord is not a member of NRRA. NRRA is helping municipalities renegotiate single stream contracts).

Currently Concord has a single stream recycling process, which may not be as effective as dual stream, and it is more expensive. In this process:

1. Factory sorts out all recyclables with equipment (expensive)
2. Operating costs average \$80/ton

Municipality covers some of those costs. Materials recovery facility sells material on backend to cover processing costs.

Markets are depressed right now. Material management facilities now prefer a contract with municipalities that will cover all their processing costs. So, they may charge \$100/ton. If they sell materials at backend, THEN municipalities would get a discount. But, there is an oversupply now of the partially recycled material.

Rich Maher: Are recycling facilities being built in the U.S. to meet the need and cover the loss of demand from China?

Reagan: About 50% of what we produce are fibers. Earlier this year, China banned recycling of fibers. Oversupply of fibers. The NE Recycling Council identified 22 paper mills here that will increase recycled share of materials (mixed paper). Some owned by Chinese! (9-dragons in Maine). Chinese companies can produce paper pulp in Maine and then import it. These vendors should come online around Dec. 2020. At that point, we may see a higher price for mixed paper source.

Single vs. Dual Stream Recycling and Contamination

Reagan: Cities that sort materials at transfer station have a more pure product.

If it's single stream, it isn't as pure. This is really the issue that led China to close its doors to our recycling materials. In U.S. and Canada, these are more picky.

Glass is an issue: it is heavy, it can break. Communities that remove glass, they have programs to take their glass.

BUT, glass coming from Concord (from Materials Recovery Facility) is contaminated (paper, plastic, etc.), so harder to find a market.

Dual stream tends to be better.

Single stream recycling leads to wishful recycling and then someone has to deal with it. People have to manually sort through it.

- For communities that do single stream – anything we can do to improve composting, is good. Keep it out of the waste stream.
- Improve/educate about composting: Cooperative composting bins
- Public education campaign as in Goffstown. Sandwich boards, videos on website, art contest for kids, newspaper stuff. Saw improvement in quality of recycling
- What we may see, Casella may say we can have up to 15% contamination. After that, there will be fees.
- So, anything a community can do to reduce non-recyclables in recycling bins puts us in a better place for composting.

Rich: What do you think about garbage disposals?

Reagan: Don't put any food waste down drains. Not a good alternative to composting. Composting leads to product that can nourish gardens and replenish soil. Leads to water treatment issues. Anaerobic digestions creates energy, but on pyramid its better to compost.

Dot: What about people that can't compost?

Reagan: Verma-composting – compost with worms

Hannah: Use a neighbor's compost bin.

Meredith Hatfield: Take compostables to nearby farm. Lewis farm takes compost for \$5 .

Garden shop in Henniker takes it...

Rob: Suggest forming a subcommittee to discuss what Concord can do on compost and how to make headway

Kelsey: How much does it cost for a municipality to join NRRA?

Reagan: 7 cents per capita.

Kelsey: Perhaps something for the Solid Waste Committee or subcommittee to think about since it sounds like Concord will need NRRA services when contract comes up for renewal.

Reagan: Responsible Purchasing is something recommended by the committee report. What does responsible purchasing mean?

Rob: Perhaps it means what can we do to reduce our reliance on plastics. On the topic of energy, how can you purchase the most efficient unit of energy to benefit residents?

Reagan: One thing that every individual can do is to purchase things made with recycled content. Does Concord have a minimum recycled content requirement for paper towels, for example. If we want value for our recycled fibers, we need to create a market for it. Consumer requirements for recycled content drives demand.

Comment: Could do the math to compare the cost of paper/plastic products over time to long term ware (washable cups, plates)...We need to show economic arguments for different modes of purchasing and waste management, even if it means a bit more work up front. Need to run cost projections out a few years into the future.

Reagan. Yes, how much do we spend on single use products vs. the cost of a couple dishwashers to wash cups and plates.

Rob: To me this makes sense. More and more people concerned about single-use plastics.

As far as the referral to this committee in terms of operations and purchasing, there is work that needs to be done. What are we doing now? What is the cost of it? What are the alternatives and the cost of those? I think what we should do tonight in terms of this [SWAC] referral is to vote to accept the referral. Then, establish a process – get a group of people together to do the analysis re: cost of single use plastics so we can come back to council with a recommendation. We may also want to look at it in the broader context of what can we do around materials management and composting, and recommendations.

Gail Paige (Concord citizen): Brought up to city. Need state legislation to ban bags and single use plastics on city property. When city property is used, do so with understanding of not using single use products.

Rob: Not sure how regulations can be applied. Indeed, the city can decide to impose a restriction upon itself about its own use of materials. Not sure if it can impose restrictions on others on city property. The subcommittee would need to do some research to determine if that's a recommendation to make to council.

Would want to consult with the Solid Waste Advisory Committee throughout.

Rob Werner: I want to establish vote to accept the referral from the Solid Waste Advisory Committee to the Energy and Environment Advisory Committee around the use of single-use plastics in city properties and events. In terms of researching how regulations may come forward to council. We will set up a process to do this, and also go back to Portsmouth to learn more.

Unanimously approved

Reagan invited all to look at NRRA website.

III. Community Power /Municipal Aggregation

Rob: Discussed with Tom Aspell having a meeting with city staff in January re: Community Power. Need to set up time that works for people - Henry Herndon has been leading the Community Power charge.

IV. Strategic Plan Recommended Steps

Rob: Strategic Plan Action Steps circulated.

May want to spend a chunk of time in January to refocus on this.

Sam: Strategic plan has received a nod from city council.

With the city, they have gone through “Table 8. Recommended Action Steps” [circulated prior to meeting] to identify who should undertake each activity. In January, with an external group, they would like to figure out what to do at what timeline. Staff has looked at who would handle what (and marked this on the Table) – after this, look to external groups to complete work assignments.

Rich: Is there an opportunity to discuss anything that has been deleted by city staff? For example – the location of EV chargers.

Rob: Next month, need to come with expectation that we will put things on the walls to discuss priorities and “external” responsibilities – what is most important to look at, at this point.

Rob: [Re: the strategic plan]. City council accepted it, though it is viewed as an iterative document.

Rich: Approval of sustainability staff?

Sam: City recognizes need for a sustainability staff. Could look to other places on what department the sustainability staff should be located, and where they would report.

Rob: Tom Aspell recognizes need for sustainability staff – it’s a question of budget, allocation of resources, where they would sit. Are there grants related to sponsoring such roles in cities?

Hannah: The staff in Nashua is based in the solid waste department.

Jessica: Notes on conversation with Tad Montgomery – Sustainability Staff person for Lebanon - on how position paid for itself, where he is located

Rob: Discussions of budgets for the next FY usually begin in January.

Linda: Would certainly like to get an answer from Tom: Will this appear in the budget?

V. General observations

Linda: Thinking back to the street tree program, I think we should say that we appreciate the energy saving aspects of tree proposal and think it is an important venture. When things come before us, we should note that we support certain things. Another example: concern about the renewal of the Casella contract re: waste, and why. Ongoing thing. How should it be seen on agenda, and how to communicate out our support and agreement for inter-committee work?

General agreement by group

Rob: Could write the tree one.

Rich: Recommend tree committee make a presentation to city council?

Linda: Our recommendations should always include fiscal impact. (ie, Styrofoam, cost of single use plastics over longer term use compared with long term)

Sam: Agrees. Take more work but it should be worth it.

General agreement re: communicating out support of certain issues of other city committees [tree planting, SWAC]; and communicating fiscal impact/benefit of recommendations where necessary.

VI. New Business

Rob: Plastics.

Surfrider Foundation Meeting, Friday 2-4pm State Legislative Office Building– what can be done legislatively around single-use plastics.

We also applied to have a **UNH Sustainability Fellow** work with us next summer.

Jessica: UNH Sustainability Fellow would lead the charge on creating a greenhouse gas emissions inventory for the city, including a methodology, identify data sources, and create a baseline for municipal government as well as community emissions (time available). They would work for 400 hours over the course of 10 weeks. We applied to receive financial support as well for hosting such a fellow. We should hear back in January whether our request was approved. Need to continue data gathering in preparation. One issue has been utility requests, such as natural gas data. Folks should continue to follow data leads in various meetings.

Kelsey: Will follow up again with Liberty Utilities about receiving natural gas usage data.

Linda: Willing to contact the NRRA about information on becoming a member.

Rob:

LCV/Clean Energy NH Legislative Update: Next Wednesday @ 12, St Paul's Church. Lunch is provided. Energy, water, other environmental issues.

Offshore wind meeting - 1st meeting of Intergovernmental Task Force (DOI) of NH, Maine, Massachusetts @ UNH, next Thursday. Discuss where lease areas will be for offshore wind. Bring all up to speed on process, plans, technology, impacts.

Will there be opportunity to testify? Yes, eventually.

Rob will go to learn and bring back information for own knowledge.

Jennifer: Chuck, Kelsea Matt, Jennifer met with **Concord Area Transit (CAT)** (Chris Voight and Terry Page, Dir. Of Transportation, Beth Hayward) – What they are focusing on. How they are marketing, weatherization, bussing routes. Weatherize 220 single family homes every year. Wait list – but limited by staffing. (they have enough funding).

Struggling with: marketing on weatherization – to younger working families (cusp of income lines); private property managers, public input on public transit meetings – how it can be more robust, service low income folks.

Sam met with Cindy also to discuss route optimization.

Rob – **RGGI funds are available for low income family weatherization**, but not those just over.

Bob Eldredge: weatherization – shortage of crews – scheduling out to Feb and March

Jennifer: monthly meetings of **Residential Energy Performance Association** (Bob is president!). Monthly workshops, nonprofit. **Every 2nd Tuesday do workshops: solar, hot water tanks.**

Kelsey would like to meet with Matt Menning – in private property developer group. Recent large projects in Hooksett and Concord, interest in solar.

Bob Eldredge: Low income fuel assistance can qualify only if qualified as low income. USDA has an excellent loan program linearly related to low-ish to moderate income levels (beginning at 1% for 20 years) – heating, weatherization. [See: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/single-family-housing-repair-loans-grants> . Available individuals with income < 50% area median or elderly]

Rob motioned to adjourn. Unanimously approved.