



Minutes
Green Committee
Thursday, 9/19/18, 4:30 PM
City Hall Conference Rm.

Members present: Ken Camera, Larry Campbell, Jacob Fox, Dan Belliveau, Michael Amadori, Anne Hoyt

Invited Guest: Carla Jordan, Associate Planner, Ontario County

Green committee meeting 9/19/18 with Carla Jordan, Associate Planner, Ontario County

Many thanks to Anne Hoyt for taking notes for these minutes.

Ms. Jordan was asked to attend our meeting to discuss the county's current recycling program as well as landfill operations.

First, we asked what is the status of recycling? The following is a synopsis of what Jordan said:

Overview

The global recycling market is in crisis in large part due to China's recent announcement that it will no longer process other countries' recycling goods with greater than .5% (one half of one percent) contamination, far below the industry standard of 7-10% contamination. This is essentially an unattainable goal using current sorting technology, especially for two commodities: glass and paper.

In part, the Chinese policy stems from China's assessment that it now has a middle class large enough to generate its own recycling needs; China will use it's recycling capacity to deal with its growing domestic needs. Because the U.S. has relied on China to take a portion of our recyclables, our own capacity to mill recyclables is not sufficient to meet the demand. That may change, however, as investment in U.S. recycling mills grows. Nevertheless, the U.S. recycling industry may never be able to fully handle our needs --

domestic mills are becoming more and more particular about contamination levels as well, and without reductions in packaging and changes to product specifications, recycling may never be economically viable.

Aluminum, cardboard, and plastics remain as valuable items but glass and paper are no longer profitable to recycle.

Ontario County Impacts and Situation

As a result of the situation with glass and paper, Ontario County is losing money on its recycling program. It costs the county \$75/ton to process its recycling while it sells baled recycled goods for \$30-\$35 (a ton????). There is no tipping fee for recycling that originates in Ontario County, but the county does charge a tipping fee for recycling that's brought in from outside the county. That tipping fee somewhat reduces the gap between the processing fee and the sale price, but not enough to generate a profit.

Commented [JCM1]: This should actually be Casella. The management and operations of the MRF is Casella's responsibility therefore they take the financial hit when markets are down.

Commented [JCM2]: Same here. Casella charges out of county tip fees on recyclables delivered to the MRF.

As a result, OC is pursuing a number of initiatives to find new outlets for glass and paper. With glass there are a number of things:

- Using glass as a beneficial use determinant (BUD) for application as road cover inside the OC landfill. This is permissible by NYS.
- Working with the DEC/DOT to find new uses/markets for glass in State and County road construction.
- Casella looking for other markets
- NYS revisions in 2017 asking for new permits from all BUD users.
- Updating the County Solid Waste plan to require higher standards of performance from the waste haulers and landfill operations in general.

GLASS

Glass is a challenging product to recycle because it is not "clean" when it comes in for recycling but often contaminated with metal rings and paper labels. At this time, however, Ontario County is using all the glass that comes in for recycling by crushing it, reducing it to a "sand-like" product, and applying it within the landfill's lined perimeter as cover and as a base for roads. This is considered a "Beneficial Use Determinant" by the state Department of Environmental Conservation, along with other uses such as in sandblasting and in the manufacture of glass countertops. There is concern that the amount of glass will outstrip New York's landfills' capacity to use glass; therefore, expanding the types of BUDs - for example in roadbeds in state and federally funded highway projects -- is in discussion on a statewide level.

PAPER

Recycled paper comes in mixed grades -- glossy, office paper, envelopes with plastic windows (not recyclable) and other impurities -- all co-mingled. Single stream recycling technology has not been able to adequately sort the different kinds of paper into marketable commodities. Ontario County is now paying to get rid of excess paper.

Ms. Jordan praised Casella's recycling program, saying it's one of the state's largest Municipal Recycling Facilities with one of the best contamination rates (6%), compared to the industry's nationwide average rate of 20%.

Commented [JCM3]: MRF – Stands for Materials Recovery Facility

Ms. Jordan mentioned that with the China market closed off there is a belief that a domestic market will start to develop over the next 2 to 3 years for recycled paper. This will require the development of stateside capacity of which the Chinese seem to be interested. Recently a Chinese company called 9 Dragons purchased a plant in West Virginia. <https://resource-recycling.com/recycling/2018/09/05/u-s-recycled-pulp-mill-purchased-by-paper-giant/>

Discussion

- GGC members asked where paper could be disposed of locally, The city's program (in development at the transfer station) for composting food wastes would welcome certain types of paper.
- Ms. Jordan talked about NYS' commitment to address the recycling crisis. One avenue would be to increase the responsibilities of producers, i.e., the companies that package their products in ways that make recycling challenging or that wastefully over-package.
- The issue of organic wastes is addressed in Gov. Cuomo's NYS Beyond Waste Plan which calls for all generators of organic wastes to dispose of these wastes within fifty miles of origin by 2020. This proposal has been consistently killed by state legislators, but is likely to become law in a few years (with a different timetable). New York City currently diverts more organic wastes from the waste stream than

any other city in the U.S., but much of that waste is then sent to composting operations out-of-state.

- Impact Earth, a non-profit based in Rochester that promotes zero waste initiatives, has been active in Ontario County assessing its school districts' capacity to recycle food wastes and developing plans for each district. The county is funding this initiative. Jacob Fox, of Organix Green Industries (the company developing the city's composting trenches) is providing cost analyses demonstrating that school districts will save money by reducing their waste disposal fees. The tipping fees at a composting facility are lower than those at a landfill. The Marcus Whitman school district has been a leader, under Dan Blankenship developing its own program prior to the county's involvement.
- Questions arose about how to prevent contamination of the recycling stream by residents since recycling is often stored in covered containers that do not allow for easy inspection by the truck operator. Jordan said some communities fine offenders or direct trash haulers to not take loads that are contaminated. Jordan agreed that better and more education on the county's recycling program is needed for residents.
- Questions arose over the county's inspections of trash haulers' loads and recycling loads at the landfill. Jordan said the current operator's permit at the landfill calls for one random check per day of a load. This means that one hauler is picked randomly, pulled aside, the truck emptied, and assessed for contamination with materials not acceptable for landfilling. There were questions about different counties, different states, and different nations (since the O.C. landfill accepts trash from other counties, from other states, and from Canada) having different standards for what is and is not acceptable for landfilling or for recycling.

Commented [JCM4]: This is pending. The County is looking to facilitate and fund such assessments in 2019.

Some members of the GGC argued for more inspections and a differentiation between inspections of local haulers operations and those bringing trash from outside of the County.

Ms. Jordan says that she asserted Ontario County's voice into a statewide stakeholder conference held back in August 29 with the DEC called NYS DEC Recycling Challenges Stakeholders meeting - August 29th.

Everyone at the conference agreed that there needs to be a multi-faceted approach to achieve higher recycling rates and best practices.

One of Ms. Jordan's biggest concerns was that recycling information is inconsistent across the County and that compromises the waste stream's purity. She said that the County will be making a big push to better inform all residents and will be involving the haulers in these efforts. There are also likely to be expansion of penalties for violations of approved recycling and waste disposal guidelines.

Ontario County objectives and activities over the remainder of 2018 can be summarized as follows:

- Continue expansion of Cty's Recycling website which was initiated in January 2018
- Promote and identify recycling and education events around the County
- Implement a recycling Blog on the website
- Given the current condition of the recycling market in County and nation provide on-going guidance regarding recycling correctly and what constitutes examples of unacceptable material and practices.
- Initiate an outreach program with all Ontario County school districts. In 2019 the County will be contracting with Impact Earth to provide a waste characterization audits to all interested school districts.
- Attend follow-up meetings with DEC and stakeholders on several topics:
 - Recycling education
 - Infrastructure
 - Enforcement of recycling rules and regulations.

Also, there is a series of "local laws" that were passed by the Board of Supervisors (BOS) over the past couple of decades, most recently in the mid 1990s, that outline requirements to recycle within the county....among other things. These laws need to be updated to reflect current conditions and outline enforcement mechanisms that can be deployed to ensure compliance within the County.

The local law outlines what is recyclable and how it should be handled. It includes mechanisms for reporting and compliance that appear to be difficult to enforce as written. Thus the need for the re-write that is currently underway.

Areas that the County is considering related to Local Law on solid waste include the following areas:

- Hauler licensing and reporting with an enforcement component
- How/whether enforcement efforts will be applied to residents whereby haulers are agents to encouragement better recycling practices (doing research in these areas)

- Consideration of what to do about chronic violators of recycling rules

Carla also wanted to point out that the Landfill Permit with Casella (expires January 2025).

The Permit lists general and special conditions under which the landfill must operate. It also references several plans that outline landfill operational requirements in more detail. The conditions of these plans are linked to permit compliance by their reference in the permit.

The Local Solid Waste Management Plan (adopted in June 2014) is a separate plan that details objectives pertaining to waste reduction goals and responsible waste management practices.
