

Vernon County Solid Waste/Recycling Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, June 11, 2014

The meeting was called to order at 9:30am by Chairman Richardson. Those present included: Brian Richardson, Ole Yttri, Dennis Brault, John Mitchell, Jerry Johnson, Hooshang Zeyghami, Bill Meeks, Greg Lunde, and Gene Edwards.

Proper public meeting notice was confirmed.

A motion was made by Yttri, with a second by Johnson, to approve minutes of the May 14 meeting. Motion approved.

May Material Volume/Revenue Report

MSW was down about three percent from last May but still two percent above for the year to date. C/D waste was up 39% from last May and is now about 12% higher for the year to date. Most other tipping fee items (tires, appliances, e-waste, and fluorescent bulbs) were also now above year to date for last year due to heavier than usual volume during the spring clean-ups. Overall tipping fees are 4% higher than last year.

Recyclable material volume has recovered some from earlier in the year but is still significantly lower than last year.

Leachate volume and management cost continue to be a serious concern. More than 3,150 tons, or about 750,000 gallons of leachate were hauled in May at a cost of nearly \$35,000.00. Given the amount of rain already received in June, this month may be just as bad. The Department has already spent about 80% of the total annual budget for leachate management.

A motion was made by Brault, with a second by Mitchell, to approve the report. Motion carried.

Sand Excavation/Hauling and Landfill Covering

There is some positive news about leachate management. The weather had been dry enough the last week of May that significant progress had been made in covering the rest of Cell #5 (the early arrival of winter had prevented the Department from completing that work last year). We have about 10% of Cell #5 left to cover and have about three quarters of an acre of the C/D waste site that is ready to cover. Getting this work done as soon as possible is the most important thing we can do to reduce the amount of leachate generated. It is only a couple of days work but requires at least 5 days of dry weather before it can be started.

Follow-up Work on the May 6<sup>th</sup> Landfill Fire

As discussed at the May meeting, although the fire departments on-site poured more than 25,000 gallons of water onto the fire, they were not able to get it entirely put out. Since the Department placed over the burned area kept the fire from re-igniting but several smoldering areas still required additional attention. Foley and Edwards had spent two half-days digging out the burned areas, saturating the waste with water, then re-compacting it into place. Landfill fires are difficult to put out but this procedure had worked well in other smoldering areas two years ago. There was a minor flare-up on Friday but that was also put out. Hopefully, we will be done with fires for a while.

### Update on Department Financial Situation

Yttri and Edwards had met with the Treasurer and County Clerk's Office (Nancy) on May 21<sup>st</sup> and a second time on June 4<sup>th</sup>, when Melanie from Johnson Block was also present, to discuss Department finances. The bottom line is as Johnson Block had already said: Accrued Liability for Landfill Closure is not cash and the Department is not in nearly as good a financial condition as Edwards had believed. This is not a total disaster but it will have an impact on how the Department will operate over the next few years. Gail Frie may have been under the same misconception as Edwards had been. Actual money was set aside in the Escrow Account to cover the cost of Long Term Care after the landfill closes but not for the actual closure.

As it stands right now, the Department has approximately \$4.12 million in future financial responsibility and only \$2.25 million set aside to pay that cost. The Escrow Account should increase to at least \$2.5 million by the time it is needed. And the Department has about \$645,000 in two other restricted accounts that could be redirected to landfill closure. That leaves us nearly a million dollars short of the financial responsibility requirements (the Auditor's number is just over \$700,000.). The Department does have a \$929,250. Letter of Credit from Viroqua Bank to meet the State's requirement that funds be available in case an emergency closure of the landfill becomes necessary. If the above restricted funds were renamed Landfill closure, the County would be in full compliance with State laws. Following brief discussion, a motion was made by Yttri, with a second by Mitchell, to combine the two restricted funds and rename them the Landfill Closure Fund.

Due to the unexpectedly high cost of constructing the final landfill cell last year, the Department had also exhausted its Treasurer's Cash account and owed the County approximately \$200,000. The Treasurer thought it would be okay for the Department to repay those funds over the next two years. Both the Auditor and County Staff assured Edwards that no Solid Waste funds had been left in the County General Fund. However, that does not apply to the \$103,154 the County had taken from the Department's 2009 budget. Committee Members felt these funds should be subtracted from the amount currently owed to the County.

The most positive information that had come from these financial discussions was that the Department has had an average annual operating profit of more than \$200,000 each of the last five years. During those five years, most of the profit, as well as most of the Treasurer's Cash, had been spent on capital projects (Cell #6 construction, engineering fees and purchase of the baler, log truck, recycling truck, end loader, water truck hoist and 8 or 9 recycling roll-offs). \$336,000 had also been placed in one of the Department's restricted funds in 2012—about \$1.5 million total non-operating costs over 5 years. With an estimated annual operating profit of about \$200,000 and eight or nine additional years of operation, making up the \$700,000 to 1,000,000 needed for landfill closure should not be a problem. However, financing any major capital cost in the next few years will be more difficult (possibly requiring a short term loan or other funding assistance from the County or another source).

Unfortunately, there will be very little money available to put toward construction of a new landfill, if the County chooses to build one.

### Evaluating Alternative Landfill Operation Approach

Zeyghami and Edwards have begun looking over a variety of possible advantages and disadvantages of both a baled waste (Bale-fill) and compact-in-place (Area-fill) approach to future operation of the

County Landfill. The above disappointing information about the Department's current financial situation may make it more difficult to change the operational approach in the immediate future—due to the expected capital cost of replacing the existing waste compactor and end loader with a larger units. Edwards still felt the potential reduction in open area of the landfill and resulting decrease in leachate generation combined with the ability to effectively handle the additional incoming waste without adding personnel made the Area-fill option worth investigating. This Agenda item will be discussed in more detail at the July meeting.

#### Review/Approve Vouchers

Vouchers totaling \$160,885.54 were presented for review. About 65% of the total was the annual licensing fee to WDNR (\$104,211); about \$19,905 was going to Southwest Sanitation for leachate hauling; \$9,863 to Sparta and Viroqua for leachate treatment; and \$2,619 to Titan Equipment to replace the fuel pump and associated parts on the Terex loader.

Following discussion, a motion was made by Yttri, with a second by Mitchell, to approve paying the vouchers. Motion carried.

The May Financial Reports were not received in time for the meeting.

#### Department Update

The baler relining project is scheduled to begin on Monday. Department staff will work Friday and Saturday to clean up the work area and begin taking the baler apart. PT Welding expects to complete the work in 3 or 4 days.

The estimate to complete the asphalt work on the driveway (from Sheldon's) came in at just over \$14,000 but the work itself has not yet been scheduled.

The new VARC employee seems to be working out well so far—there is some potential to hire him part-time after the VARC internship ends.

We had a baler breakdown on Monday. Apparently the thunderstorm on Sunday blew out the baler transformer. Fortunately, we were able to get a replacement transformer by Tuesday morning and the baler was back up and operating before noon.

The next SW/R Committee meeting will be Wednesday, July 9 at 9:30am.

#### Closed Session

Motion by Brault, with a second by Johnson, to enter into Closed Session in accordance with the published Agenda. The motion was unanimously approved.

#### Return to Open Session

Motion by Johnson, with a second by Brault, to return to Open Session. The motion was unanimously approved.

Motion by Yttri, with a second by Mitchell, to adjourn the meeting at 11:21am. Motion approved.