

Vernon County Solid Waste/Recycling Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 14, 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, and Gene Edwards.

Proper Public Meeting Notice was confirmed.

Motion by Brault, with a second by Mitchell, to approve minutes of the April 9th meeting. Motion approved.

April Material Volume/Revenue Report

The report was distributed at the meeting. MSW volume was up 8% above last year and C/D waste was 16% higher than last year. Overall tipping fees are now approximately 3% above the year to date total for last year. Based on waste volume so far this year, Edwards expected total waste volume for the year would exceed 17,000 tons for the first time ever. While the increasing waste is good from a revenue standpoint, the Facility and Staff are operating at about 20% above the anticipated maximum capacity. Operating at this higher capacity is causing stress on Department equipment and staff and will need to be addressed if volume remains this high or increases.

Recycling numbers continue to be lower than usual, primarily because we still have 5 loads of shipped materials that we have not been paid for (loads don't show up on the report until we have been paid). Incoming recyclable material volume is actually pretty close to last year's numbers.

Leachate numbers, on the other hand, look horrible and actually are horrible. The Department has already spent more than \$38,900. on leachate management and will likely spend close to \$30,000 in May. Most of the problem is a result of much more open landfill space than usual; however, we did have above normal snow cover last winter and one of the wettest April's on record (more than 7" of rainfall). As much of the open area as possible will be covered as soon as weather permits. The Department will have spent considerably more than half of the annual budget for leachate management by the end of May.

Motion by Yttri, with a second by Mitchell, to approve the report. Motion carried

Increased Recyclables from Some Towns

The amount of recyclable materials picked-up from some of our Town drop-off site has increased significantly. Plastics, cardboard, and mixed paper are the primary materials that are increasing. So far the Department has been able to address the increase by either providing additional containers or additional material pick-ups. We are not sure if this trend will continue or spread to other Towns. If it does continue, we will need to find a more efficient way to handle the increased materials. Buying more roll-off containers and providing additional collections of material is driving our cost up significantly. Dan (Recycling Manager) will be keeping an eye on the situation and the Department will be looking at other possible ways to address the increased material.

May 6th Fire at the Landfill

Early last Tuesday, May 6th, we had a major fire at the landfill. Jason Steele, our truck mechanic, was coming back from a late night job and saw the fire at about 1:30am. He reported the fire to Edwards and to the Sheriff's Department. Fire departments from Viroqua, Westby, Readstown, and La Farge responded. Much of the top of the C/D waste area was on fire (Edwards distribute an aerial photo to show the fire location) and it took a few hours to get it under control. The fire departments left the scene by about 5:30am but there were still smoldering areas. Edwards had C & C Landscaping on-site later Tuesday morning to cover the burned area with sand to keep the fire from reigniting. But the remaining hot spots will need to be addressed further—small areas within the burned area are still smoldering despite the weekend rain.

It is not clear what caused the fire. Although a number of fires have occurred in the landfill over the years, no sign of fire or smoke had been seen in over a year (following efforts by the Department to excavate, saturate, and re-compact areas where fire had reoccurred in the previous five years). This recent fire may have been a result of a hot load being delivered to the C/D waste site but there is no evidence to support that possibility. The fire was reported on Channel 19 news.

Possible Alternative Approach to Landfill Operations

The County Landfill currently has far too much open area. That open area, in addition to the increased annual precipitation Vernon County has received over the last few years, has dramatically increased the Department's leachate management cost (about \$137,000. last year). There are three primary reasons for the large open area: (Edwards referred to the previously distributed aerial photo for this discussion).

- Cell #6 was constructed (2013) before Cell #5 had adequate waste placed in it, which has caused significant issues with draining storm water off of the covered waste in Cell #5. Construction was scheduled based on recommendations from CWE. CWE had safety (stability of the waste grade on the east side of Cell #5) and regulatory concerns (the Plan of Operation called for placing waste in Cell #6 before bringing Cell #5 to final grade as part of the Vertical Expansion (2008) approval).
- Construction of Cell #6 was delayed several weeks due to the wet weather during the 2013 construction season. Winter then arrived early, preventing completion of the covering of Cell #5. Although most of Cell #5 is now covered, this spring's wet weather has also delayed completion of that project.
- But in Edwards' opinion, the fact that the Department operates two separate open areas within the landfill and the use of the baled waste approach to landfill operation are the primary reasons for the large amount of open area and high leachate generation rate.

Edwards felt switching the landfill operation to the more typical compact-in-place approach would dramatically reduce the amount of landfill area open and therefore dramatically reduce leachate generation and management cost. The Committee discussed various aspects of this suggestion for several minutes. Although no specific action was taken, the Committee authorized Edwards to work with CWE to further investigate this alternative approach to landfill operation.

Ag Plastic Concerns

Dealing with agricultural plastic generated by area farmers continues to be a significant problem for the Department. Despite all the discussion and hype on the topic over the last 3 or 4 years, there are still no workable markets for the material. The material is more difficult to process than either regular garbage or recyclable materials and the volume delivered to the landfill continues to increase. Unscheduled delivery of the material by area farmers has caused significant delays in normal Department operations and, of course, it is taking up valuable landfill space. Edwards does continue to agree with the Committee's previous decision that keeping Ag plastic from being burned or left to blow about the country-side is a service worth the moderate cost.

Steps have already been taken to limit Ag plastic delivery to specific days and times but other changes to the way the Department handles this material are necessary. The best idea is probably to set up a dumpster where the Ag plastic can be deposited and stored until the Department has time to bale it. Edwards hoped to get that approach set up within the next month (a suitable container is not available until after the spring clean-ups have been completed).

Follow-up Discussion of Department Finances

Despite the presence of Johnson Block representatives at the April meeting and the extensive discussion that took place, Edwards did not feel the Department's financial condition had been adequately clarified. Edwards assumed the Accounts knew what they were talking about but he needed to better understand the process in order to effectively manage the Department's finances. Edwards had scheduled a meeting with Nancy and Rachel for next week to discuss the issues in more detail and would meet with the Auditor again if necessary. Vice-Chairman Yttri would attend the meeting if possible. Edwards will report back to the Committee at the June meeting.

2013 Year end Budget

Last year's budget has not yet been finalized and won't be until July but Edwards wanted to give the Committee a heads up that the year-end report will not be very positive. Expenses, excluding capital costs and liability for landfill closure, had been kept well below budget despite much higher than budgeted leachate management costs. But recycling revenues were also down more than expected. On a cash only basis, the Department took in about \$223,000 more than it spent. But non-cash accounting entries for landfill closure liability (\$133,659) and depreciation (\$117,526) will make it appear that we lost about \$27,500. This is basically the same thing that happens every year. The more serious concern is that last year's capital costs (Cell #6 construction, including the river sand haul and engineering fees) were MUCH higher than anticipated. We exhausted our Treasurer's Cash (or Operating Cash) Account and owe the County roughly \$200,000. The Department should be able to repay those funds within the next two years.

Review/Approve Vouchers

Vouchers had already been submitted to the County Clerk—they had to be in to the Clerk by Monday in order to be processed for the Finance Committee on Thursday. Any voucher not approved by the SW/R Committee today would be withdrawn before being submitted to Finance.

Vouchers for review totaled \$28,585.54. Leachate management was by far the largest cost (vouchers for Cities of Viroqua and Sparta and for Southwest Sanitation) at \$18,366.75. Other larger bills included:

\$3,031.63 for diesel fuel and propane (Premier Coop); \$1,626.66 utility bill (Vernon Electric); and \$1,712.23 for truck repairs (La Farge Truck Center). Edwards also had two vouchers that were authorized by Chairman Richardson during April: \$150.00 to DNR for Mike's Operator Recertification and \$4,788.07 to the Town of Viroqua for the Host Community fee—2nd half of 2013.

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

April Financial Reports

The reports were distributed at the meeting. Edwards provided a brief overview of information contained on the reports. Following discussion, a motion was made by Brault, with a second by Mitchell, to approve the reports. Motion carried.

Department Update

The small leachate seep last year (at the southeast corner of the landfill) returned during the high precipitation in April. Edwards and Hooshang will check it out after the meeting to determine what can/should be done.

The baler reline project has been delayed because PT Welding has not completed their work with Quik Trip Corporation.

Sheldon's Asphalt will be submitting a bid to complete the driveway sometime soon. The work will have to be done on the weekend to avoid major disruptions to landfill operations.

The new VARC employee started this week. He seems to be a good worker and has made significant progress in cleaning up much of our litter.

The Department has a lot of construction type work to complete this summer but needs a longer period of dry weather to get the work done.

Edwards planned to schedule a Closed Session at the June meeting to discuss some business related issues. The Committee preferred to have the Closed Session at the end of the meeting.

The next SW/R Committee meeting will be held on June 11 at 9:30 am.

A motion was made by Yttri, with a second by Johnson, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Dennis Brault, Secretary