

Montgomery County
Integrated Waste System Strategic Plan Task Force¹
Meeting Notes
March 28, 2019

Attending: Chaz Miller, Caroline Tayler (phone), Lauren Greenberger, Ken Lavish, Keith Levchenko, Sara Bixby, Robin Wiener (arr. 5:45 p.m.), Peter Ettinger (phone)

Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)- Division of Solid Waste Services (SWS): Patty Bubar, Marilu Enciso, Willie Wainer

- Montgomery County Staff
 - Debbie Spielberg, County Executive Office
 - Adriana Hochberg, County Executive Office
- Harvey Gershman
- Chris Kirk, Pangea Markets
- Sierra Club: Amy Maron
- EIWG: Adam Diamond
- SWAC: Mark Freedman, Kelly Doordan, Carol Jones

Called to order by Chairman Miller at 5:30 p.m.

1. Approve minutes from the March 13 meeting.

Lavish moved and Ettinger seconded to approve the minutes from the March 13 meeting. Carried unanimously.

Question for Wainer about when the Task 5 Report will be done. A: End of April a summary report will be posted on the Master Plan's website

2. Discussion of "Foundational" priorities for increased waste reduction and recycling (i.e., further review)

In a poll of Task Force members, Miller reported that six people supported:

- Education and enforcement
- Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT)
- Food Waste – but without consistency around approaches
- Consolidating waste collection routes/zones in Subdistrict B

The Task Force discussion began with those.

¹ May 30, 2018 Memorandum from Isiah Leggett, County Executive, to Hans Riemer, President, Montgomery County Council

- Education and enforcement

Wainer described the current County emphasis on recycling education to reduce contamination (Recycle Right). This ongoing pilot project includes 400 households located in Sub-district A. It involves volunteers and enforcement inspectors. Volunteers go door to door educating residents, while the inspectors check for the recycling set out. They go Monday through Friday counting how many containers were contaminated on a week and they follow up the following week.

The reason for this pilot project was that the Montgomery County MRF is seeing a 2 to 3 percent contamination rate in incoming paper and a 15 to 20 percent contamination rate in containers, much of that attributable to plastic bags.

Q – Levchenko: Are enforcement inspectors separating the wrong plastic containers when they find them? A – Wainer: They leave an orange tag and a flyer with pictures explaining the set-out errors. The recyclables tagged in this way are not collected. By not separating the material for the household, it helps reinforce the learning.

- PAYT

Six Task Force members listed this for additional consideration. Two said with a pilot; two said don't use bags – they prefer carts.

Miller said the Task Force and County need a legal and financial explanation of how to do PAYT in conjunction with the County's systems charge. It's likely everybody would pay a base fee, but more analysis is needed on how to structure the revenue stream to support the program.

Wiener said she didn't identify PAYT for additional review because she wasn't clear how the financials would work; how the system would affect lower-income residents, and how it would work with multi-family dwellings.

Bixby will check with SWANA members trying to identify jurisdictions that have a PAYT and its finance through a System Benefit Charge.

Greenberg said she was informed County staff were going to work on a PAYT evaluation. Bubar said staff will do an evaluation ²of the applicability and how to implement after a Task Force recommendation supporting PAYT.

Task Force consensus was that it is interested enough in PAYT to ask for additional evaluation of a PAYT system appropriate for Montgomery County.

² Some of the proposed programs to reduce waste and increase recycling that will be part of the final Master Plan will require a feasibility study, once proven its feasibility; a pilot program may be designed and executed before County-wide expansion.

Miller added that Task Force request may include a pilot program as well. Wainer said it isn't budgeted; the County would need to select an area. Levchenko said it is difficult to establish a PAYT fee structure for a pilot program as the DEP and Task Force can't change tax bills and County laws.

- Food scrap options

The Task Force had a lot of support for this approach but with a wide range of possible applications – commercial collection, ban on commercial disposal, both residential and commercial. Miller said it's great to advocate for a ban but not realistic without somewhere to take the banned food scraps.

In some states, the ban has been written in a way that specifies that it's a ban is in effect as long as there is a facility within a certain radius from the generators, i.e., 50 miles (like NYC). This may entice the private sector to build a food scraps processing capacity.

Wainer spoke about a survey of large commercial generators (grocery stores and restaurants) to identify how they are managing food waste in comparison to how they are managing solid waste.

Wainer said the County is close to an agreement with Prince Georges Western Branch facility to accept some portion of food scraps collected from Montgomery County. He said that is a short-term solution, and the real solution is for Montgomery County to have its own facility as facilities in other counties have a history of getting in operations trouble and closing. The timing and schedule of bringing something online depend on the system, but he said at least 15 to 18 months to site, design, construct and start-up and at least a year for siting and land acquisition.

Ettinger recommended having Patrick Serfoss from the American Biogas Council speak to the Task Force about anaerobic digestion (AD).

Miller summarized that the Task Force consensus was that food waste processing is a Foundational need if a ban on disposal of food waste is to be implemented and that the process should start with commercial generators and work down.

- Consolidating waste collection routes/zones in Subdistrict B

Background: Subdistrict A is where the County contracts for both for waste and recycling collection. Originally it was the more densely populated lower part of the County. Subdistrict B has an open waste system (homeowners choose their own waste collector) but the County contracts for recycling collection.

The Task Force discussed whether a more uniform waste collection system across both Subdistricts would improve recycling performance. Lavish said it would be more difficult to implement PAYT in Subdistrict B as currently served. Levchenko said the PAYT evaluation should include both subdistricts and consider environmental impacts, current fees for waste collection. Benefits of contracting Subdistrict B include potentially adding food waste collection county-

wide and adjust the timing of collections; all of which speak to consistent contracting. Bubar noted that contracting Subdistrict B would affect the business community and possibly minimize the number of haulers working in Montgomery County.

Bixby said if the County and Task Force intend to work toward zero waste – not burning and not burying – then controlling the collection of residential waste county-wide, directing it to preferred facilities is fundamental. If we can't do collection changes, we can't do the rest.

- Resource Recovery Parks (after discussion, changing this name to Reuse Centers)

Greenberg said she believes a lot of stuff being dropped at the Transfer Station now is usable and that salvaging/separating those materials should be considered. Resource Recovery Parks/an eco-village/repair cafes – possibly in an empty strip mall - would take recovery to another level.

Taylor said she believes multiple Resource Recovery Parks are needed and spoke about a County/community system for reuse and recovery from the current “beauty spots.”

Levchenko said it would have to be a combination of government and volunteer effort.

Bixby asked to change the label for this approach away from Resource Recovery Parks as the current County facility is the Dickerson “Resource Recovery” Facility, which is another name for waste-to-energy. Using the same label for two very different technologies is confusing. Adjusted to Reuse Centers.

- Textile Recycling
- Construction and demolition (C&D) debris

Greenberger asked about including an emphasis on C&D, even though it doesn't affect the County's diversion report to Maryland. Levchenko said some 60,000 to 70,000 tons per year of C&D are received at the Resource Recovery Facility. This material is categorized as C&D debris when it crosses the scale at the Transfer Station. The discussion identified that to close the RRF, this C&D would also have to be managed, regardless of state calculations. There's some interest in an ordinance requiring separation on job sites.

Moved by Bixby, seconded by Wiener to ask for additional analysis of the following technologies:

- Education and enforcement
- PAYT
- Food scraps collection, potential bans, and processing options
- Consolidating waste collection routes/zones across Subdistricts A&B with resulting effects on recycling
- Reuse/fix-it/recovery options
- Textiles recycling
- Multi-family recovery
- C&D debris separation and recovery

- All with an emphasis on how they help Montgomery County meet the goal of reducing what is sent for disposal.

Carried unanimously.

Discussion about implementation timelines:

The discussion circled back to implementation timelines and budget considerations. The process steps include:

- DEP accepts final Solid Waste Master Plan
- County Executive agree or disagree (modifications to the Solid Waste Master Plan are made)
- Presentation to the Proposed Solid Waste Master Plan to the County Council – hearings and incorporation in the budget
- Preparation of the 10-year Solid Waste Plan incorporating activities of the Master Plan scheduled to be executed in the 2020 – 2029 time frame. Public hearings about the 10-year Solid Waste Plan
- To the Maryland Department of Environment for approval (before January 2020)
- Budget – supplemental to FY2020 or wait until FY2021

There are two possible approaches to upgrading the County’s material recovery facility (MRF):

- Site on a new site, design, and bid construction build, equip: operational no less than 2 and up to 4 years after the report is approved, assuming a site can be acquired
- Close the MRF, demo the current facility, and reconstruct it with materials transferred to a different processing facility in the interim. Timing per Wainer – 5 months for an equipment evaluation; 8 months to install and bring online. This assumes the current site size and building are adequate for future needs, which may/not be the case.

Wiener asked about the cardboard she saw on the Transfer Station tip floor during a recent visit. Wainer said recyclables sometimes come commingled with waste from multi-family and construction projects and that more enforcement at the Transfer Station is critical. Once OCC hits the TS tipping floor, it’s too late to separate it due to safety and contamination issues. Wiener suggested doing a small study at the TS on the delivery of “problem” materials.

Greenberger said the different models for GHG reduction come up with different results. She disagrees with the federally-accepted WARM model and said it is important to consider other models.

Wiener said it would be good to bring other resources to the discussion – such as the Recycling Partnership.

Lavish said he’s like to consider AD and aerobic digestion technologies.

Schedule

HDR's schedule – delivery of Task 5 is waiting on the outcome of this meeting. Get guidance from the DEP – presentation to the DEP Director and staff on April 23rd (not a public meeting); finalize the Task report the last week of April or first week in May.

Schedule for development of Tasks 8 and 9: HDR is working on Task 8 – existing facilities discussion – and can't start on Task 9 – “what is left” – until the other tasks are complete.

The Task Force discussed meeting the week of April 15th.

Public Comment

Adam Diamond questioned how the County can secure capacity for food scraps, a material is doesn't control? A: Wainer said the County needs a certainly that capacity and the processor will be there and operational after the County convinces generators to separate food scraps.

Harvey Gershman: Likes the list developed by the Task Force. Commercial franchising and making Subdivision B like Subdivision A will increase uniformity, diversion, and environmental quality.

Motion by Miller, second by Wiener to adjourn at 7:53 p.m. Carried unanimously.