

**ULSTER COUNTY RESOURCE RECOVERY AGENCY
MINUTES OF THE ZERO WASTE COMMITTEE MEETING
AUGUST 18, 2020**

The Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency held a Zero Waste Committee Meeting on August 18, 2020. This meeting was at the Agency's Main Office located at 999 Flatbush Road, Kingston, NY 12401. There was also a call-in audio option available through Webex.

The proceedings were convened at 1:30pm.

The following Board members were present: Committee Chair Lisa Mitten, Committee Member Katherine Beinkafner, Committee Member JoAnne Myers, and Board Member Charles Landi.

Also present were Acting Executive Director Tim DeGraff, Director of Operations & Safety Charlie Whittaker, Recycling Coordinator Angelina Peone, and Recycling Educator Melinda France.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PUBLIC COMMENT

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

Lisa Mitten stated that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss the content of the proposed zero waste resolution, as well as why the committee is creating it. She continued that she is interested in hearing from staff about the role such a policy would play within the Agency, and how it can support the Agency's work, rather than make it more challenging or difficult to achieve.

Tim DeGraff said that since taking over as Acting Executive Director he had become more aware of the roll the legislature has been playing in all of this, which he said concerns him because of potential conflicts of interest particularly with the Recycling Oversight Committee. He added that the more he has spoken to staff, the more he has realized that the Agency is already doing a lot of the stuff outlined in the zero waste definition. He said that the Agency actually has resolutions exactly for this purpose from 2003 and 2004. He said that Angie has spent a lot of time putting together a four page document that includes all of the things the Agency has done/is doing to educate the public which is a core principal of zero waste. He urged the Board to concentrate on the staff and their work, instead of what the legislature is doing.

He stated that he and Charlie Whittaker were trying to plan a covered area down near the compost facility so that the Agency can utilize the compost bagging machine. He said they realized that in that area there is potential for not only a bagging area but a demonstration area and educational building as well, which could include a glass pane and barriers that would enable the public to see everything going on. He said that it would be a great opportunity for Angelina Peone and Melinda France to use reclaimed and recycled materials in the construction of that building. He noted that it would also be safer to have the public in one area where they can see everything instead of wandering around the facilities. He said

that focusing on a building off of what the Agency is already doing and really pushing the educational aspect is key. He added that he and Charlie Whittaker have been tweaking the Compliance Officer job description to create a Recycling Compliance Officer. He said that Angelina Peone drafted a resolution that he believes really supports what the Agency has been and should be doing.

Charlie Whittaker said that it's important for the goals outlined for zero waste to be reasonable and attainable. He said that the Agency is already doing as much as they can while doing it safely and within the regulations.

Tim DeGraff talked about the Hudson Valley Materials Exchange which no longer exists. He said Reuse Centers are really more for the not for profit world and not what the Agency was set up for. He stated that trying to pull everything out of the transfer station would be very unsafe and truly needs to be done before it gets to the Agency. He added that the Hudson Valley Materials Exchange was receiving \$300,000 per year in grant money to support their operation, which still did not succeed. He said the Agency also has to consider the financial aspect as well.

Charlie Whittaker told the Board about all of the dangerous substances and items that are often brought into the Transfer Station that the staff needs to pull out, which is dangerous for them. He said he has spoken before to the Board about starting to make small changes to divert more things from the Transfer Station. He said changing everything at once is overwhelming and unattainable for staff. He added that finding more markets for products is getting more and more difficult, especially since it's harder to find markets overseas which needs to be considered as well. He said if a Reuse Center is what the Legislature really wants, then they should do it separately from the Agency. He said that when the Agency did try to do something similar in 2005, he had three employees end up at Emergency One with injuries. He said that not only is the practice unsafe for his employees, but by spending so much time picking out anything of value, they miss things that are actually hazardous to the environment such as asbestos.

Tim DeGraff stated that Agency staff all agree with zero waste and have all made changes within their own homes to be more environmentally friendly. He said that sharing that knowledge and educating the public is the most important thing.

JoAnne Myers said she agrees with educating the public, and said it starts at source separation.

Tim DeGraff caught JoAnne Myers up on the staff's plans for an educational building because she entered the meeting after his comments.

Charlie Whittaker spoke about how the plan mentioned composting newspaper and textiles, which he said are great but not what the Agency does. He stated that he would have to have permission from the DEC to deviate from the product the Agency is currently making. He said that the people creating all of these new plans and rules have not taken the Agency's permit or operations manual into account. He continued that he will not deviate from how the food waste operation is running. He said that adding newspapers and other items into the compost can add things like microplastics to the finished compost.

Lisa Mitten stated that the point of the meeting is not to talk about any outside plan or what outside people are telling the Agency what we should or should not be doing.

JoAnne Myers responded that those people need to be educated.

Tim DeGraff said that in September he plans to have a resolution for Angelina Peone's toter loan program which builds on what the Agency is already doing.

Angelina Peone shared her detailed program overview with the committee (attached). She read the points of the recycling department's core philosophy, which she stated informs every aspect of their programming:

- Waste reduction, recycling, and composting have environmental, economic, and social impacts.
- Zero waste is easy if you start small and think big – always provide examples of approachable, tangible next steps or behavior changes to empower residents and businesses.
- Emphasize the solutions over the problems – call to action is positive reinforcement and positive social marketing.
- Learning can be fun! Promote interaction, dialogue, hands-on experiences, and an inclusive learning environment.
- Engage with the concept of Rethinking Waste – and promote the 7Rs (Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Regift, Recover as much as possible, and then Recycle).
- Recycle Right – contamination can damage equipment, harm workers, waste resources/time/money and ruin the value of other recyclables.
- Curbing carbon emissions will slow the effects of climate change and global warming.
- Communicate the Agency's role in sustainable materials management and the impact of waste.
- Always share additional resources beyond the day's topic.
- Actively seek feedback from audiences to evaluate programmatic strategies.
- Maintain program tracking procedures to evaluate program impact.

She said that the team offers free professional consultation services to businesses, schools, hospitals, hotels, etc. to evaluate, improve, and implement recycling, waste reduction, and composting programs. She said they do hands-on waste audits to help them analyze their waste stream and connect them to the best resources possible for disposal and recycling outlets in the community.

She said that in order to target specific audiences that may have unique needs, they pool industry groups together with their peers in target audience engagements. These audiences include school administrators, recycling workers from outside the Agency, landlords, and the business community. She added that over the next ten years the recycling department will have a focused strategic approach year by year to target specific industries such as healthcare, hospitality, correctional facilities, schools, landlords, festivals and community events, etc.

She spoke about the recycling department's seminars, which are all ready to go for any group.

Melinda France said that everything on this list has only been created in the last year and a half, and will only continue to grow. She stated that when they began, the entire program needed to be revamped, and she and Angelina Peone have focused all of their time on building this programming.

Angelina Peone said the many of the classes they hold at the facility end in tours. She said that the Agency has an open door policy, and they are happy to show anyone around the facility and teach them about what the Agency does.

She said that the recycling department also assists the Agency with their Partners in Composting Program, with a formal onboarding process for all new partners and professional services to help them launch their programs including consultation services, staff training, promotional materials, the tote bin loan program, as well as facts about the environmental and social impacts of their program to share with their users. She said that regardless of an organizations participation in the Agency's program, the recycling department will share information and resources they need to start their own program.

She said that the recycling department has a wonderful youth education program led by Melinda France.

She talked about the Agency's targeted marketing campaign across social media, radio, print advertising that focuses on a different topic each month.

She said that the recycling department is extremely excited to welcome the Agency's new compliance officer when that person is selected. She added that they always focus on education before fines when approaching compliance issues.

She said that the Agency staff belongs to many industry trade groups and serves on multiple committees. She said that this gives them access to the best research-based information available about emerging technologies, innovation in materials management, and best practices in education.

She gave an example of a zero waste resolution that she said she believes acknowledges the staff and the work they currently doing and are building on.

JoAnne Myers stated that she thinks the resolution is wonderful, but she would change the wording of "The Agency's recycling department has adopted core teaching philosophies..." to "The Agency's has adopted core teaching philosophies..." because she believes it has been adopted all throughout the Agency. She said that there is a disconnect with the County legislature and Recycling Oversight Committee not understanding how the Agency works and what it does.

Lisa Mitten said she has been wondering how the Agency's community education budget lines up with other Agencies.

Tim DeGraff said he can get that information from Rockland County.

Angelina Peone said that she thinks they Agency would probably exceed others that are about the same scale. She said that in speaking with groups of her peers, she has heard their struggles with their budget and not having the same flexibility the Agency does since it isn't a county department.

Ken Gilligan said in the next few years funding will become more difficult, partly due to New York State's bail reform causing the state to lose money.

Charlie Whittaker expressed his concerns that the Agency and Legislature needs to be focusing on maintaining the existing laws. He said there are issues with the existing system that need to be focused on, and creating a bunch of new laws will take away from that.

JoAnne Myers said that decades ago she took legislators to Fresh Kills to show them in person where their trash was going.

Melinda France talked about the recycling department's efforts to advertise that the Agency does free tours.

Ken Gilligan suggested they invite Bill Kemble for a tour so that he can write a nice article about the operation.

Charlie Whittaker said that is a great idea when the construction at the facilities is finished.

Lisa Mitten thanked Angelina Peone for taking the time to create a draft zero waste resolution.

Angelina Peone stated that there are two members of the public on the Webex meeting, and one of them has a question for the Committee.

She read the question which came from Laura Petit: "Waste diversion starts prior to the tipping floor. Are there any zero waste suggestions or innovative diversion programs that you are considering?"

JoAnne Myers responded that the answer is education of every single individual.

Tim DeGraff added that composting is an important method for diversion. He reminded the Committee that next week the Board would be voting on the resolution for Angelina Peone's toter loan program. He said that recycling and composting are two main building blocks of zero waste, which the Agency is already doing.

Lisa Mitten asked if a list could be written up of all of the things the Transfer Station is diverting.

Tim DeGraff said they have already been putting together such a list.

Katherine Beinkafner said some of the haulers are putting things aside that when they get to the Transfer Station they can put divertible materials in a separate spot.

Lisa Mitten said that often there is an emphasis on the word recycling leftover from the 1980's. She said that the programs the Agency uses go beyond just recycling. She said that language can be challenging to work with, but that she feels that the term recycling is too narrow for what the Agency is doing.

Charlie Whittaker agreed with Lisa Mitten.

Angelina Peone agreed as well, stating that the Agency's programs are largely based on Beyond Waste and the sustainable materials management hierarchy, where recycling is the very last thing to be done to make a difference.

JoAnne Myers asked Angelina Peone if there is a new term that could be used.

Angelina Peone agreed that language is important and said that is why she dislikes the term "food waste" and instead uses the term "food scraps" or "organics" which is also the terminology the industry is moving toward, in the same way "waste management" is not used as often as "materials management" or "sustainable materials management" at this point.

Lisa Mitten asked if the committee and staff could work to come up with a term that communicated the complexities of this philosophy and programming.

She said that before the meeting she was looking at the Zero Waste International Alliance's definition of zero waste which is: "The conservation of all resources by means of responsible production, consumption, reuse, and recovery of products, packaging, and materials without burning and with no discharges to land, water, or air that threaten the environment or human health." She said the Agency's mission statements aligns with this definition.

She asked if anyone else had anything to say.

Charles Landi said that he has been on the Board since 2012 and has dealt with five County committees overseeing what the Agency does. He said that everything the committee is talking about is an accumulation of the LSWMP that cost the Agency \$129,000 at the direction of the NYSDEC. He said the plan goes into depth about everything they are talking about, and instead of initiating a new plan, the Board should look at the plan it already has. He expressed his disappointment that the plan has been neglected, and is currently sitting on a shelf in Manna Jo Greene's Energy & Environment Committee under false pretenses of needing a SEQRA review. He continued that Cornerstone did a phenomenal job on the plan, and if there is something that should be added or changed then it should be done during the two year review.

JoAnne Myers responded that they aren't talking about a new plan, but instead how to implement the LSWMP. She said she came later into the process as a Board Member, but would not have agreed to spend all that money on the plan when we could have used someone in-house.

Charles Landi agreed that it was misguided.

JoAnne Myers said that she insisted on inserting the concept of zero waste into the plan.

Charles Landi referenced a 35 page letter put together by Fawn Tantillo that includes everything the Agency is doing that is in the plan. He continued that he's really worried about the Seneca Meadows crisis that the Agency has about 3.5 years to prepare for. He said under ideal conditions, developing a landfill would take around 5 years. He said he appreciates what everyone in the room has done, but he thinks it's misguided.

Lisa Mitten asked Charles Landi whose responsibility it is to move that process forward. She said if it's the Board's responsibility and he wants the Board to talk more about it, maybe a committee could be formed that focuses on citing a landfill.

Charles Landi questioned whether there really needs to be another committee to do that.

Lisa Mitten said she has been asking for some time what the next steps are. She said they need to figure out if the staff has the capability to do that work, and if not maybe they will need to hire someone.

JoAnne Myers said that the plan outlines all of the various ways the Agency could handle waste. She said all of the technologies demand a certain level of solid waste. She said that a lot of the options in the plan are not going to be feasible for the Agency.

Ken Gilligan said the Agency doesn't have the bonding capability to do anything and will need input from the Legislature.

Charles Landi responded that first the Agency will have to present the Legislature with a bill.

Ken Gilligan said that the Board will need to tell the Legislature that it wants a landfill, and they will make the decision.

Charles Landi responded that David Donaldson stated in his County address the need for a landfill.

Ken Gilligan said that the Board needs to create a resolution that states and they want a landfill to get things moving.

Lisa Mitten asked if a first step could be to challenge the Legislature to revisit the Agency's bonding authority.

Ken Gilligan said that the Legislature would never do that.

JoAnne Myers said first the Agency needs to educate them all.

Ken Gilligan said that the Board has to know that the Legislature wants a landfill, since they are paying for it.

Charles Landi asked what more David Donaldson could have said besides "we need a landfill."

JoAnne Myers said that she is glad that he said that because it forces Ulster County residents to own their waste.

Charles Landi said that right now the Agency's tipping fee is \$105 per ton, but when that is no longer available the Agency may have to ship waste by rail to some Midwestern state and the tipping fee could go up to \$250 per ton, which would really wake up the Legislature. He said with a tipping fee that high, construction in the area could come to a halt due to the C&D disposal costs which has happened in other counties.

Charlie Whittaker said that the Board needs to remember that the Agency spend thousands and thousands of dollars additional for the Legislature's input on the plan, which was supposed to expedite it. He said that the Agency is not getting what was promised from the Legislature.

Charles Landi said that 2 or 3 months ago Tim Rose got a phone call from Ed McAndrew, the director of Sullivan County's DPW asking if Ulster County is still interested in GUSSWA. He asked Tim DeGraff where that is in the process.

Tim DeGraff responded that they set up a meeting to discuss the details on September 1. He said they just had 5 legislators change, so there may be new opportunities.

Charles Landi asked Charlie Whittaker to tell the Board about Terry Houck, the Town of Wawarsing Supervisor.

Charlie Whittaker said that they talk, he's a good supervisor and runs a good Transfer Station. He said that is all that he knows.

Charles Landi stated that there is a 653 acre tract of land in Wawarsing belonging to T&T Associates. He asked Tim DeGraff if he had been in touch with them.

Tim DeGraff responded no he has not.

Charles Landi said that he believes Tim Rose was in touch with them. He said that he has spoken to them.

Ken Gilligan reminded Charles Landi that this meeting is being recorded, and this is not the purpose of the meeting.

Charles Landi said that he understood. He continued that there are some things going on that may be able to move this. He also said that he's really concerned that no one is looking at the \$129,000 plan.

Katherine Beinkafner asked when the next meeting of the Energy and Environment Committee is scheduled.

Charles Landi responded that he doesn't know.

Tim DeGraff said that he believes the meeting is on August 31.

Charles Landi said the plan should be advanced to the floor and if they need to go talk to them about it they will.

Tim DeGraff asked if it would be ok to use Angelina Peone's drafted resolution to present to the Board on August 24.

Lisa Mitten asked the Board for their opinion.

JoAnne Myers responded that she thinks it's wonderful.

Ken Gilligan said he can look at it and add any necessary language. He also said that they should make sure the resolution only mentions the Agency, not the County or Legislature.

Charles Landi asked Angelina Peone if she went over her draft resolution with Fawn Tantillo.

Angelina Peone responded that she did not.

ADJOURN

Lisa Mitten motioned to adjourn the August 18, 2020 Zero Waste Committee Meeting at 3:02pm. Seconded by Katherine Beinkafner. 3 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 absent.

May 10, 2021

Motion to approve the above transcribed Minutes of the August 18, 2020 Zero Waste Committee Meeting was made by _____, moved by _____ and seconded by _____. ___ in favor, ___ opposed, ___ absent. Absent: __

The minutes were approved by the Board.

Transcribed by: Brenna Whitaker, Administrative Assistant. Meetings are recorded and available upon request.

Signatures:

Fred Wadnola, Chair

Ken Gilligan, Secretary

Brenna Whitaker, Administrative Assistant

DRAFT