



State of Vermont
Department of Environmental Conservation
Waste Management & Prevention Division
1 National Life Drive – Davis 1
Montpelier, VT 05620-3704

Universal Recycling Stakeholders Group Minutes – ci 21, 2018, 1-3pm

Group Members Present:

Teri Kuczynski	Addison County Solid Waste Mgmt. District
Patrick Austin	Austin's Rubbish and Roll Off Service
Michael Batchter	Bennington Country Solid Waste Alliance
Hillary Cole	Barre Housing Authority
Kim Crosby	Casella Waste Systems
Al Sabino	Casella Waste Systems
Mike Casella	Casella Waste Systems
Cathleen Gent	Central VT Solid Waste Mgmt. District
Carl Witke	Central VT Solid Waste Mgmt. District
Michele Morris	Chittenden Solid Waste District
Jen Holliday	Chittenden Solid Waste District
Craig Goodenough	Goodenough Rubbish Removal
Tom Kennedy	Greater Upper Valley & So. Windsor/Windham County Solid Waste Mgmt. Districts
Carl Mitchell	Greater Upper Valley Solid Waste Mgmt. District
Lisa Ransom	Grow Compost
Susan Alexander	Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Mgmt. District
Jeff Myers	Myers Container Service
Frank Stanley	Myers Container Service
Paul Tomasi	Northeast Kingdom Solid Waste Mgmt. District
John Leddy	Northwest Solid Waste District
Jimmy Fanton	Norwich University, Sodexo Retail Manager
Carl Diethelm	Rutland County Solid Waste District
Trevor Mance	TAM Waste Mgmt.
Amanda Carlson	Town of Coventry
Woody Little	Toxics Action Center
Izaak Herman	Toxics Action Center
Dave Rubin	Vermont Technical College
Paul Burns	VPIRG

By phone

Natasha Duarte	Composting Association of Vermont
Ham Gillett	Greater Upper Valley Solid Waste District
Shannon Choquette	Northeast Kingdom Solid Waste Mgmt. District
Heather Shouldice	Shouldice & Associates
Pam Clapp	Solid Waste Alliance Communities
Tara Holt	Town of St. Johnsbury

ANR Staff Present:

Rebecca Ellis	DEC Deputy Commissioner
Cathy Jamieson	Solid Waste Program Manager
Mia Roethlein	Solid Waste Program
Josh Kelly	Solid Waste Program
Emma Stuhl	Solid Waste Program

Minutes

- 1:00pm – Group reviewed meeting ground rules and approved them. Universal Recycling Stakeholders ground rules included:
 - Everyone has a chance to speak and participate
 - Limit comment to 1-2 minutes
 - Focus comment on the topic that is being discussed
 - Be constructive, respectful and polite
 - Use specific examples
 - Speak up

 - 1:05pm – Cathy outlined the purpose of the meeting, which centered on discussing options and preferences for what should happen with the requirement of haulers to collect food scraps. The meeting plan included five short presentations on different aspects of the hauler requirement for collection of food scraps and then would have an open discussion with limited time for each person to speak. Cathy requested that people think about their thoughts ahead of time so they can speak them within their allotted time. Organics processing capacity and how ANR will handle compliance for disposal bans will be discussed at future meetings.

 - 1:10pm – S.285 Summary – Rebecca Ellis gave an overview of the key changes to Solid Waste statute and showed attendees how to look up statute on the Vermont General Assembly Website (<https://legislature.vermont.gov/bill/status/2018/S.285>). Click “As Enacted” to see the final bill. To look up another bill, enter the bill number in the search box on the top right of the webpage. Once you search, you can change the session near the top left of the screen to find the desired bill. ANR also provided a summary of the changes.

 - 1:20pm – Short Presentations on potential changes to the UR Law for the Universal Recycling Stakeholders Group to consider, including whether haulers should be required to offer collection of food scraps, and what criteria should be used to determine where this should be required. Criteria to consider include population, housing or route density, and more.
 - **Cathleen Gent, CVSWMD Planning Analyst**, presenting on the work of Bruce Wescott, the General Manager. Bruce has been studying the density question for a while. Successful food scrap diversion rests on the three-legged stool of home composting, transfer stations/drop-offs, and curbside pick-up, each of which is good for different circumstances and could have negative outcomes in certain circumstances. CVSWMD would like the discussion to assume that there will be a hauling system of some sort in place. Bruce has looked at different options, including what population, housing density, and units per square mile looks like on a map.
 - Pat Austin: Are their people reaching out to CVSWMD asking for hauling service?
 - Cathleen didn't know.
 - Pat: Is Bruce's theory that hauling works in dense areas? Has the district taken steps to offer curbside service? If not, why not?
 - Cathleen: This could happen in the future. CVSWMD wants to discuss more with partners to decide how to move forward.
 - **Craig Goodenough, Goodenough Rubbish**. He's been in the trash business for over 30 years and has seen a lot of changes. He's been against Act 148 since it started because it's unconstitutional to force businesses to do this. They collect food scraps and he thinks it's a bad idea to force everyone to collect. Food scrap haulers don't collect recycling. The emphasis on recycling has gotten more expensive. Haulers can't show on a residential bill that the cost of recycling is going up. There is lots of contamination in the recycling because people think it's free. Lots of small haulers have gone out of business because they can't keep up with the requirements. He thinks the state should strike the mandate. Haulers all try to divert everything they can. He grinds food scraps in his garbage disposal at home. If there is a way to save money or break-even, haulers are happy to haul, but there are lots of
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costs involved—out of this world. More mandates make it harder to stay in business. Vermont will keep losing haulers. They need some help.

- **Hillary Cole, Barre Housing Authority.** One of their sites is composting (not a high rise). But in high rises, people don't think about their trash; it just goes down the shoot. Maintenance people don't know to take care of it. They have to pay for hauling while their funding gets cut every year. They are managing seven buildings built in the 70s. This change will be a big financial burden.
 - **Jimmy Fanton, Norwich University's Sodexo Retail Manager.** They generated 322,000 lbs. of food scraps last year, which get picked up commercially. For success, haulers must have skin in the game. Will residents participate if they have to pay for it? Can government mandate that people must pay for it? All together, we want to use this material to generate a product that can be sold to generate revenue. There's a tipping point for what people are willing to pay to manage the material and to access the finished product.
 - **John Leddy, NWSWMD & President of the District Managers Association.** District Managers have been participating in the UR law since the beginning. Their district and others are seeing success in implementing the Universal Recycling law. There are businesses and institutions that are eager to sign up for food scrap hauling. They can sometimes save money because they produce less trash. Residential collection can be challenging. The district is not sure if driving to every house in VT to collect food scraps is the best solution and most environmentally preferable so they are devoted to providing convenient alternatives: drop offs, feeding animals, backyard composting. Feeding animals is organics processing capacity, but they're not sure what that capacity is. They see the challenges that haulers face and residents face with a bill for food scrap collection, but they want to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to divert organics.
- 1:50pm Stakeholder Feedback – At this time Cathy turned to all meeting attendees giving them ~2 minutes to discuss whether haulers should have to offer food scrap collection or not.
 - **Tara Holt, Town of St. Johnsbury:** She's glad we've identified that there's not a one-size-fits-all solution for this. St. Johnsbury has both a dense area and a rural area. If the bigger goal is to reduce waste, then using lots of gas to collect might not be the best solution, so drop-offs and other solutions are important. It's good that folks are working with businesses and recognizing the challenges businesses face.
 - **Pam Clapp, Solid Waste Alliance Communities:** Most of her towns are rural so she feels it would be a hardship for haulers to have to do residential collection. Her biggest concern is that small transfer stations could get lots more food scraps in 2020 and if haulers don't have to collect, transfer stations may not be able to figure out what to do with their food scraps.
 - **Natasha Duarte, Composting Association of Vermont (CAV):** CAV is not taking a stance but is working with others to explore other markets for compost and compost products. They're working to build support of community and neighborhood-scale composting, which are important components for managing organics. There are also costs for not separating and managing organics. We have to get rid of them in one way or another and they are resources that can be put to higher uses.
 - **Susan Alexander, Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Mgmt. District:** The District has a fairly new composting facility as of Oct. 2017, Lamoille Soil, which just screened and sold its first compost. There is some terrific hauling in their district. Grow Compost and Black Dirt both haul there, but a large area of their district is underserved by the hauling community right now. They collect food scraps at all six of their facilities, but not everyone wants to use the collection points, so there is a gap in services. The district wants to make it as convenient and effective as possible for people to manage their food scraps. Vermont is a smart state with clever people, so we can solve this. Think about it beyond the solid waste perspective. It's also an economic development and food system topic. Is there a way that we can reallocate where budgets go?
 - **Teri Kuczynski, ACSWMD:** Her board wants to continue with the 2020 ban. They are focused on making sure generators have options, including businesses, schools, and institutions. They're proactive about teaching people to backyard compost and provide bins. They're sympathetic to hauling challenges but think making sure there is hauling service seems key to success.
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- **Carl Diethelm, RCSWD:** Carl encourages concerned parties to consider mandating haulers collect organics at a food scrap density, not population density. This could be the 1/3 ton per week so that those generators have somewhere for the food scraps to go on July 1, 2020. This would exempt haulers from providing residential pickup unless they want to, other than larger housing facilities. However, the hauler mandate to collect food scraps doesn't seem to account for all the small haulers that only have one truck or so. Only requiring the haulers that can accept food scraps by 2020 to offer it to the food scrap dense areas would make more sense than mandating all haulers to do so. Bike powered food scrap collection is a low-cost practice that could target the residential side of population-dense areas. They are generally privately-run companies, but if some grants were offered by the state government, this would boost their likelihood of forming.
 - **Dave Rubin, Vermont Tech:** Dave attending to become informed. VT Tech has an anaerobic biodigester on campus. It can take food scraps, but they have to be super super clean, with no contaminants. Contaminants are an overriding concern.
 - **John Leddy, NWSWMD:** As a District, they are a hauler of food scraps and provide backyard composting and community composting services. They don't want people left out and hauling is difficult. They're interested in looking at route density as a limit to what the law requires, while making sure other options make sure people aren't left out. Contamination is an issue in recycling and especially in commercial composting and anaerobic digesters. Vermont needs good statewide marketing.
 - **Woody Little, Toxics Action Center:** Thanks to everyone for engaging in this process. There are benefits of zero waste systems, big picture environmental benefits and also benefits for communities that face pollution threats from living next to waste management systems. Woody looks forward to learning more and creating incentive based systems.
 - **Paul Burns, VPIRG:** He's interested in seeing this program succeed. Vermont is achieving important successes. Food banks have seen lots more contributions. There are real benefits to the state. They want to make sure all Vermonters have the opportunity to compost and participate and to make sure no one is left out. Perhaps some type of pilot program could be helpful? Looking at density issues could be helpful. He wonders whether people are going to demand the service unless they know why it matters. We need some incentive. He thinks Vermont will see greater participation as we near the 2020 food scrap ban.
 - **Michele Morris, CSWD:** CSWD has invested significant resources into supporting composting drop-offs, diversions, and backyard composting. Over 250 businesses are listed for significant diversion. CSWD strongly discourages the use of disposals because disposals are overloading the wastewater system. CSWD strongly supports continuing hauler services so that businesses can make food scrap separation possible. The Department of Health loves food scrap separation because it cleans up the trash and reduces vermin. There are lots of challenges with residents and multi-residential units. CSWD is getting inquiries about hauling services from residents. CSWD tells the residents they can organize their neighborhood for pickups.
 - **Lisa Ransom, Grow Compost:** They started Grow Compost with the goals of soil health and food justice, and they feel bullish about the market. They feel optimistic about having the infrastructure and hauling capacity. Lisa feels this can be done as a community. She's concerned about leaving people out, especially apartment buildings and folks without land. Keeping the material that they collect clean is how they are able to sell it in the end.
 - **Tom Kennedy, Southern Windsor Windham Counties and the Greater Upper Valley Solid Waste Districts:** They've completed construction of a compost facility and are working with Grow Compost. It will be operational soon. The board's position is to try to make food scrap separation as convenient as possible with a focus on institutions and commercial entities. They have done this over the last three years, instituting strong backyard compost and facilities programs. Their fast trash collection sites are also collecting food scraps. Lots of different collection systems line-up with varying contamination rates.
 - **Amanda Carlson, Town of Coventry:** They have very low density and no composting facilities, so it's very hard to promote composting. She's interested in a solution for the NEK where everything is so spread out.
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- **Mike Casella, Casella Waste Systems:** He's been fighting this for a while. There are lots of people in the room who can make this work, but a main goal is soil quality. He thinks we need to look at the rules and regulations and figure out how to make sure compost facilities operate well so they don't do damage. There's not going to be one system that works. The industry changes daily. If we pick the wrong system now, it might cause consequences down the road. Right now, he doesn't think anything would change so we should let the market and industry work it out. If we push too hard and too fast, we could open ourselves up for trouble and we might have to deal with the consequences later. They did a study in Chittenden County. They offered food scrap hauling service to 1,200 residences, made 5 contacts with each residence, and offered it as a free service. Only 112 homes signed up for service. Once they were going to charge \$9 per month, it dropped to way fewer. They're still collecting food scraps on this route and losing money monthly.
 - **Pat Austin, Austin's Rubbish and Roll Off Service:** He's been in the trash business for over 30 years. Population density is not the same as route density since there are multiple haulers in one area and there are other options (backyard composting and down the drain). Apartment building recycling is really contaminated, and this can't happen with organics. If we force it, we're going to have nothing but contamination. When that material gets to the organics facility, it will contaminate the whole facility. These apartment buildings are going to contaminate unless you have a staff who monitors what's going on, but apartment buildings don't have that. If people bring food scraps to a facility or a neighbor's farm, they are cleaner. Once compost is contaminated, it won't be able to sell.
 - **Al Sabino, Casella Waste Systems:** We all agree on the benefits of handling food scraps separately as a resource stream. The question is what government's role is. There's a cost to all this. Even if you reduce the weight of the material going into the landfill, you've added a collection, so the cost won't go down unless you're a large enough generator that it makes sense whether there's a mandate or not. We have to be able to separate these costs so people see that it's real.
 - **Paul Tomasi, NEKWMD:** In 2015, NEKWMD's board adopted a resolution to support a robust hauling community. They feel that forcing haulers to offer this service will drive them out of business. Many haulers have a single vehicle and would not be able to offer this service. They formed a committee and worked with legislators to propose changes to Act 148, including the hauler requirement. Capacity is an important topic. They understand that the way the law was passed was to build capacity. This has met with limited success and they don't see that they'll have additional capacity on line yet.
 - **Kim Crosby, Casella Waste Solutions:** There is not enough data from a hauling perspective to assure haulers that enough people want to pay for food scrap hauling service. There's not enough data to see if they will be paid back for their investments. Contamination is a big issue. Madison WI stopped their 7-year-old residential food scrap hauling program because dealing with contamination was so expensive. Food scrap hauling is a specialized service that not all haulers are equipped to provide.
 - **Craig Goodenough, Goodenough Rubbish:** Craig wants to know what will happen in 2020 when a load goes to the landfill with food scraps in it.
 - **Trevor Mance, TAM Waste Mgmt.:** TAM operates a compost facility and is a hauler. Trevor could talk about the benefits of composting for a long time, but there are also negatives. He's invested money, but has not received marketing help for their finished product. They can't sell enough of their product. He is fatigued as a business person and with the process of how it's going. This is his last summer as a composter. If nothing changes, he will leave the business. They have a lot of skin in the game and need more support. The districts continue to get bigger with funding but the private industry is not. The cost of doing business in Vermont has sky rocketed. There is severely reduced landfill capacity in the northeast.
 - **Jen Holliday, CSWD:** CSWD understands that the hauling requirement is a concern in many areas of the state. In Chittenden County, they have stayed neutral because they feel that they have sufficient hauling capacity in the county and they can leave it up to market demand. If there is not a demand, then it is not needed. If there is enough service coverage, then they don't need to require everyone to provide the service.
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- **Michael Batcher, BCSWA:** Michael would like to see the continuation of commercial and institution pick-ups. He's sees challenges with residential pick-up. We need to find markets for compost products, especially with the storm water requirements.
 - **Jimmy Fanton, Norwich University, Sodexo:** There is a cost to doing business. Doing the right things also costs money. We need a way to get the material to a facility, which will cost something. He understands that he'll pick up that cost. As a Vermonter, he understands that composting at home is the right thing to do but also that there's a cost to doing it. We need to do three things: 1) Figure out who the haulers are 2) Need to train them in how to do it and when 3) need a measurable end game when it's been done for a while and a way to stop and reassess how it's being done.
 - **Hillary Cole, Barre Housing Authority:** They need more education in their communities because they can't even figure out how to recycle half the time. Composting is a challenge and could be a challenge for maintenance staff.
- 2:50pm – Reflect and Close
 - Cathy Jamieson summarized some of the major themes addressed in today's discussion:
 - Rural routes are difficult. There are questions about the environmental benefits of collecting food scraps from rural routes. It's good to have options for less dense areas.
 - Contamination in food scraps is a genuine issue. There is a need to focus on good collection.
 - Marketing compost products is critical to the success of programs.
 - Generators need to have options. There is a need for more education about the options.
 - Don't want to leave anyone out.
 - Let the market play out. Don't require.
 - Some areas don't have certified compost facilities/drop offs.
 - Cost, including for the hauler. Should it be mandated given the cost?
 - Consider these topics more.
 - Look at a pilot program to steer us.
 - Be careful to not lock ourselves in and not be able to change our course.
 - Look at this as an economic development topic.
 - Next Steps
 - Post Meeting Survey – Will be sent via email. ANR to compile results and review at next meeting.
 - Biennial Report to the legislature – ANR will be drafting this and will post it for public comment in the fall, including a summary of the stakeholder meetings and ANR's recommendations.
 - Next Meeting – Will discuss meeting frequency, regional organics processing capacity, Vermont disposal bans, and solid waste hauler compliance.
 - Discussion and Adjourn:

There was some discussion at the end of the meeting about the survey being sent to all solid waste haulers that haul trash and also about discussing the survey results and density at the next meeting. Some haulers commented that volume and weight are key and more important than density.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm and Mia handed out an information sheet on compliance perspectives on the disposal bans for haulers, so that we can discuss it in future meetings.
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