



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Zero Waste Advisory Commission

Recommendation Number: 20160810-3d: Land Application of Biosolids

WHEREAS the Austin American-Statesman reported on June 27, 2016 that the City of Austin was exploring the possibility of land applying Class B sewage sludge from its municipal wastewater system in Bastrop County, and

WHEREAS the Austin American-Statesman reported on June 5, 2016 that an earlier proposal to land apply the City's sewage sludge in Fayette County quoted Austin Water Utility employee Jane Burazer as saying that this process "is in the best interest of the environment," and

WHEREAS the article further identified land application of sewage sludge as part of Austin's "zero-waste" philosophy, and

WHEREAS the Zero Waste International Alliance and Austin's Zero Waste Master Plan define Zero Waste as "a goal that is ethical, economical, efficient and visionary... (eliminating) all discharges to land, water or air that are a threat to planetary, human, animal or plant health," and

WHEREAS the Archives of Environmental and Occupational Health reported that land application of sludge is associated with significant increases in reported health problems among exposed communities, including "excessive secretion of tears, abdominal bloating, jaundice, skin ulcer, dehydration, weight loss... general weakness... bronchitis, upper respiratory infection, and giardiasis," and

WHEREAS the Canadian Journal of Infectious Diseases reported that "pathogens are not the only contaminants of concern in sewage sludge... (it) also contains potentially harmful levels of toxic metals and environmentally persistent chemicals such as polychlorinated biphenyls and dioxins," findings echoed by other studies, and

WHEREAS the US Geological Survey determined in 2014 that land application of sewage sludge could contaminate soils and groundwater with chemicals including pharmaceutical drugs and hormone disrupting compounds used in antibacterial soaps, and

WHEREAS there have been a host of other studies and reports determining extensive discharges to the air, water, and land from sewage sludge land application, and

WHEREAS the City of Austin already diverts a substantial proportion of its sewage sludge into a higher and better use—"Dillo Dirt" compost,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Zero Waste Advisory Commission advises the Austin City Council that land application of biosolids, with the exception of compost, should not be considered beneficial reuse or consistent with the City's Zero Waste principles, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Zero Waste Advisory Commission recommends that the Austin City Council take all necessary steps to sustain the Dillo Dirt program after curbside composting is fully implemented, including the possibility of expanding the Dillo Dirt program, and



BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Zero Waste Advisory Commission recommends that the Austin City Council direct the City Manager to convene all necessary city departments to develop a strategic organic materials management plan prior to approving any contracts committing Austin Water Utility's organic products to any vendor, with the exception of a contract that specifically addresses a higher and better use for the 2/3 of biosolids currently being land applied, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Zero Waste Advisory Commission recommends that the Austin City Council direct the City Manager to negotiate but not execute contracts before they have been presented before the relevant Boards and Commissions for discussion and public review.

Date of Approval: August 10, 2016

Record of the vote: 10-0-0-1 Commissioner Bones absent

Attest: Michael G. Sellen

(Staff or board member can sign)