



Zero Waste Advisory Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes August 10, 2016

The Zero Waste Advisory Commission convened in a regular meeting on August 10, 2016, in Council Chambers in City Hall in Austin, Texas.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Acuna called the Commission Meeting to order at 6:31p.m.

Board Members in Attendance: Gerry Acuna, Cathy Gattuso, Shana Joyce, Heather-Nicole Hoffman, Amanda Masino, Joshua Blaine, Kaiba White, Stacy Guidry, Rick Rojo, Jeff Jampietro.

Staff in attendance: Bob Gedert, Michael Sullivan, Erin Benoit, Jessica Frazier, Jessica King, Richard McHale, Lisa Boatman, Jane Burazer, Judy Musgrove, Ken Lockard, Charles Vaclavik, Jeff Larsen, Liana Kallivoka

1. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

One member of the public signed up to speak on this item.

Nathan Allen, of Little Herds non-profit group, spoke on his organization that uses food waste from local businesses, and uses them as a feed base for black soldier fly larvae to be used as a high quality feed option for local poultry farmers to increase their flock size to put more food into the local community.

2. APPROVAL OF June 2016 MEETING MINUTES

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Hoffman and seconded by Commissioner Guidry. The minutes from July, 2016 meeting were approved 9-0-1-1 with Jampietro abstaining and Commissioner Bones absent.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

3d. Recommendation: Sludge Treatment and Zero Waste Goals

This item was taken up out of order.

5 members of the public signed up to speak on this item. Ryan Hobbs and Paul Gregory donated their time to Bob Gregory to no objection from the Commission.

Jane Burazer, Austin Water, took questions on the item. Commissioner Masino asked for a brief education on biosolids, for example, the differences between Class A and Class B compost.

Lisa Boatman, Austin Water, discussed biosolids process engineering and time and temperature requirements of the process.

Chair Acuna asked for a brief history of the item, and Ms. Burazer spoke further on the background and history of Dillo Dirt and the treatment procedures of wastewater. Ms. Burazer noted in 2008 Austin Water began contracting for land application after previously land applying at Austin Water and Austin Energy locations as permitted by TCEQ until the amount of biosolids coming in became more than could be handled with Dillo Dirt as well as land application at the above mentioned properties. Generally about 1/3 of biosolids produced has been historically composted for Dillo Dirt, and the market demand for Dillo Dirt has decreased over the past several years, even after several convenience factors were addressed to make it easier and more economical to purchase. Competition from private sector has been a factor in the decrease in demand for Dillo Dirt. Ms. Burazer discussed the procurement process used to choose the current prospective contractor. Ms. Burazer said the timing of the proposed biosolids contract and the proposed curbside organics expansion

could leave a potential for future initiatives involving both food waste and biosolids, and recalled a compost fire at the Hornsby Bend site from 2013 resulting from too much of a stockpile of biosolids product. Ms. Burazer noted that proposals for Dillo Dirt were requested in the current request for proposals (RFP).

Chair Acuna asked about composting and bulking agents.

Bob Gedert, ARR, discussed prohibition on using this at Hornsby Bend due to FAA regulations intended to prevent scavenger birds from gathering above the facility lands. He noted that a goal exists that within five years where the two departments could revisit the decision whether to comingle the AW and ARR programs under one contract. Mr. Gedert added that Austin Energy and Public Works have tree trimming operations that generate around 45,000 tons of material that could serve as a replacement for the ARR materials removed over the course of the proposed residential composting expansion. Ms. Burazer noted that the quantities needed for bulking agents were shared in the current RFP.

Chair Acuna asked if the Austin Water goal is to remedy this fiscal challenge by gradually phasing out Dillo Dirt which in turn is going to have sludge available solely for land application.

Ms. Burazer noted that within the RFP, proposals had to state how to handle Class B biosolids. Ms. Burazer noted that Synagro's proposal that biosolids would all be composted to Class A, and she was permitted to disclose this.

Commissioner Blaine asked if the proposed agreement would end Dillo Dirt and is that a goal, and if so is the City Council aware of this and are they in approval? Ms. Burazer noted that ending the Dillo Dirt program was not a goal, but a possible outcome of this process.

Commissioner Blaine asked what the best practice was in handling biosolid waste, to which Mr. Gedert responded that this type of waste lies outside of his expertise and he deferred to Austin Water representatives.

Chair Acuna asked where the biosolids would go if not land applied or composted, to which Mr. Gedert noted they would be landfilled, which is the lowest priority designation, but still the pathway if other pathways are not approved.

Commissioner Guidry asked if land application was not considered diversion. Mr. Gedert noted that it can be considered diversion but not within the context of ARR's Zero Waste plan, and that the biosolid waste stream is not counted in ARR's zero waste accounting as it's generated and disposed or diverted, but it is still diversion. Commissioner Guidry noted that Dillo Dirt is an award winning program and Council has not directed that it end, and there has been no public input on the matter.

Bob Gregory, Texas Disposal System, noted concern with compliance, unproven proposed methods, potential odor problems from lack of bulking agent being available to adequately compost to standards of Dillo Dirt, and increased land application of class B sludge using inferior processes. Mr. Gregory handed the commission a packet of papers with email and background information on two proposed agreements currently slated for Council consideration related to biosolids and noted that a delay of consideration of the items before council was his preference, so further evaluation and opportunity for public review and comment could occur.

Mr. Gregory stated his opinion that the likely failure of staff and Synagro's proposed agricultural composting methods due to lack of sufficient bulking agent, curing time and properly composting 100% of the City's biosolids will set the stage for staff promoted flow control.

The commission continued to discuss environmental variables and permitting variables regarding land application of biosolids.

Commissioner Blaine asked Mr. Gregory if high quality compost production was possible in 2-4 weeks. Mr. Gregory stated that in his opinion it was not but to ask the proposed contractor. Mr. Gregory discussed processes used in composting.

Commissioner Guidry asked what prevented city staff from negotiating with TDS on this contract. Mr. Gedert noted that biosolids and food waste are not mentioned in the current master landfill agreement, and noted it is a city purchasing policy to bid out contracts rather than to develop side agreements.

Mr. Gregory noted that the master agreement allows for negotiation for this on composting and noted that his company would pay \$4.50 per yard for unscreened Dillo Dirt, and that the city is currently proposing to flood the market with Dillo Dirt selling for 86 cents per yard which will have detrimental effects on the market. Mr. Gregory noted anti-lobby restrictions as preventing his company from bidding on the item.

Ms. Burazer responded that they have put the Dillo Dirt out for bid before in a competitive process, because inventory was increasing, and that Texas Disposal Systems chose not to bid on it.

Mr. Gedert notes that the city purchasing department governs the bidding process, even for revenue contracts.

Commissioner Jiampietro asked Mr. Gregory why he didn't bid on it. Mr. Gregory said it was because of the anti-lobbying ordinance being interpreted incorrectly. He said he did not want to jeopardize his being able to contact city officials regarding other matters. He stated that in his opinion it is the wish of the City Manager to make a public utility out of commercial waste collection in Austin, which jeopardizes his business, and that creating a lack of bulking agent available will result in the city mandating pulling agents from other resources currently involving commercial collection, such and construction and demolition waste.

Andrew Bosinger, Synagro, spoke about composting and noted that false statements were being made regarding the contract for which his company was selected as a contractor. He noted that although 4 week-long processed material might meet Class A requirements but it doesn't mean it's going to be purchased, and that market forces will force curing, screening and refinement of it to make it marketable. Commissioner Masino discussed terminology with Mr. Bosinger. Mr. Bosinger noted you must address multiple markets to keep the consistent flow of biosolids moving, and that the agriculture market is a minimal segment of the market.

Commissioner Blaine asked about coliform count at 4 weeks. Mr. Bosinger noted it was below 1000 MPM (most probably number per gram). Mr. Bosinger noted that the private sector is more flexible and better at further refinement to add value to meet varied market segments. Commissioner White asked for clarification on MPM per classes, to which Mr. Dawson answered 2 million MPM for Class B and 1000 for Class A.

The Commission discussed heavy metals, pathogen rates, application rates, and sites of applications of agricultural products as well as various markets for different types of compost with staff and Mr. Bosinger.

In response to Commissioner White, Mr. Bosinger said that he expects the production of Dillo Dirt to increase under the new proposed agreement. He stated that the proposed contract requires all product produced to be Class A composted, and he believes this is a better solution for Austin. Mr. Bosinger stated that market conditions have changed since the advent of Dillo Dirt and application of private sector resources can enable the survival of the Dillo Dirt product. He believes 100% of this can be turned into Dillo Dirt and marketed locally.

Commissioner Hoffman asked why can't the city keep producing it and marketing it as is happening already. Ms. Burazer said that the city has no problem producing the product but that its marketing and delivery capabilities are lacking.

Andrew Dobbs, Texas Campaign for the Environment, discussed land application of sludge being not a diversion strategy, but a disposal strategy, and noted that Class B land application of sludge is not a zero waste strategy. Mr. Dobbs noted that land application of sludge is destructive to human health and the environment, that Synagro does a lot of it and is responsible for a lot of destruction to human health and the environment in Texas and other places. This project doesn't appear to have Class B land application, but we don't know.

Mr. Dobbs recalled a biomass contract from the past, scheduled right when Council returned from recess and that was inappropriate. Mr. Dobbs noted a need to slow down and take a harder look at the issues involved and allow public input in the process, and that policy is made by elected officials, not by staff.

Mr. Dobbs stated that Dillo Dirt will be effectively eliminated by this contract and Class A sludge could be land applied in Austin and encourages ZWAC to pass the recommendation presented at this meeting with some additions. That all of the city departments' organic waste streams be reviewed and recommend to Council to only negotiate this contract, not execute, and to come back before Water and Wastewater Commission and ZWAC.

Chair Acuna notes that he would like this to be completely vetted before the ZWAC makes a decision.

Bob Gedert noted that departments have been talking for years about this item, as to where the needs are for organic material management within and between the city departments. Mr. Gedert noted that some organic material has been cross donated between departments, and that contract consolidation between departments can sometimes work but all may sometimes not, but that the communication is happening cross departmentally.

The Commission discussed language and wording of the draft recommendation and made edits to the recommendation from the dais. Austin Water staff Lisa Boatmen and Ken Lockard answered questions from the Commission on various components of biosolids processing, including environmental compliance, testing, land application, and other technical aspects. Ms. Boatmen noted that any plastics within end products are introduced largely via the yard waste involved, with a very small amount resulting from digested sludge from wastewater.

Jessica King, ARR, noted regarding discussion of biosolids, that within the development of the ARR Strategic Plan which had a great deal of public input and serves as the policy foundation for the Zero Waste Master Plan, biosolids materials were not deemed as a resource ARR was able to impact directly, which is why the city's diversion rate does not include biosolids at this point.

Commissioner Blaine said that biosolids may need to be considered in the long term under the Zero Waste Master Plan and to emphasize this is an environmental and social justice issue, and took pause with what he has heard is Synagro's record on these issues. Commissioner Blaine noted some confusion that the two items related to the recommendation were not on the ZWAC agenda for this meeting, and he would prefer to make a recommendation on the items actually going before Council. Mr. Gedert clarified that the recommendation before the commission now is the regarding the relationship of the issues involved to zero waste goals and conveyed that the two items going before Council are under the review and consideration of the Water and Wastewater Commission, not the ZWAC.

Chair Acuna noted that the recommendation does what the ZWAC can do now but in the future the body can still discuss various ways how to increase diversion rates, and the Commission continued discussion of the language of the recommendation until agreement on a final version was reached.

The discussion ended and a motion to approve the recommendation as edited was made by Commissioner Acuna to no objection, and was unanimously approved 10-0-0-1, Commissioner Bones absent.

3e. Recommendation: Recycling in City of Austin Parks

This item was taken up out of order.

One member of the public signed up to speak on the item.

Commissioner Blaine introduced the item and asked of staff if they know the cost differences of putting recycling containers next to each trash cart versus recycling and compost containers in parks facilities across Austin.

Jeff Larsen, Parks and Recreation Department (PARC), answered it would cost \$1.25 million to put a recycling bin next to each trash container and but for recycling and compost tandem containers, he did not have those figures.

Noting an unmet needs request to roll out 343 containers, Commissioner Blaine asked staff why that level of carts was noted. Mr. Larsen answered about how the figures were determined, the different facilities that would be involved, that some dumpsters would be needed, and due to some locations not being an appropriate place for dumpsters.

Commissioner White asked if some smaller parks could have typical residential recycling?

Jessica King, ARR, responded using Big Stacy pool as an example, with its very small access to their parking lot and dumpster, as a place where staff would look at other options then a dumpster, like maybe a service point on a residential route. Ms. King mentioned billing components, and material level evaluation, so if ARR put it on a residential route it needs to be determined if it would accommodate their needs and requires further evaluation including pool staff training.

Mr. Larsen answered more questions from the Commission and discussed the methods and challenges of collection of refuse and recycling collection in parks and other facilities.

Commissioner Jiampietro asked if ads could be placed on them to offset some costs? Mr. Gedert noted that current City code won't allow it.

Ms. King added that the Parks board said it was a community value not to utilize public areas for advertising private companies.

Commissioner Jiampietro noted it seems like a win-win and could use companies with a good environmental record. Ms. King noted from her memory that it was a firm value of the Parks commission that the City not utilize public park areas for advertising private companies.

Charles Vaclavik, PARD, answered questions on cost of containers.

Commissioner White noted a need for recycling containers anywhere a trash container is should be a general principle.

The commission discussed the draft recommendation and possible edits to its language to clarify the intention.

Staff and commissioners discussed variables within the proposed recommendation, such as cart colors, and potentiality for sponsorship.

Mr. Gedert explained where the recommendation would go after the commission, in its context of the budget process and its concept menu, if it was the will of Council to include it in the budget process.

Andrew Dobbs, Texas Campaign for the Environment spoke on the item and encouraged that there should always be a recycling cart next to trash carts everywhere, and it should involve the community in generating ideas about different type of carts. Mr. Dobbs noted seeking efficiencies in PARD processes could generate some movement on the issue, and informally suggested an idea to sell Dillo Dirt and use the excess proceeds to fund cart purchases for PARD.

Further edits were made to the draft recommendation and a motion was made by Commissioner Blaine to approve the edited recommendation and was seconded by Commissioner Hoffman. The motion was approved 9-1-0-1 with Commissioner Joyce voting no, Commissioner Bones absent.

3. OLD BUSINESS

a. ARR FY2017 Budget

One member of the public signed up to speak on the item.

Bob Gedert introduced the item and asked for questions and a favorable recommendation from the Commission.

Move to rec an acceleration of the curbside organics collection

A motion was made by Commissioner Hoffman to recommend an acceleration of the timetable for residential curbside organics collection, Commissioner Blaine second. The motion was approved 9-1-0-1 with Commissioner Joyce voting no, Commissioner Bones absent.

Co-Char Gatusso moves to approve the proposed budget with a recommendation for an accelerated timetable for expansion of residential curbside organics collection, Commissioner Hoffman second.

The motion was approved 9-1-0-1 with Commissioner Joyce voting no, Commissioner Bones absent.

Commissioner Joyce noted her vote to oppose as support for weekly recycling, but not support for organics expansion.

b. Organics Committee Update

No members of the public signed up to speak on the item.

Organics committee update: Commissioner Hoffman, Chair of the committee, gave an update from the July 16 meeting and the commissioners discussed. Discussion ended and no action was taken on the item.

c. Joint Sustainability Committee Update

No members of the public signed up to speak on the item.

Commissioner White, ZWAC member of the committee reported updates from the committee. Discussion ended and no action was taken on the item.

4. STAFF BRIEFINGS

Director's Report – Customer Satisfaction Survey Results, Austin Materials Marketplace, City Council Actions, Statistical Reports and Performance Measures.

No members of the public signed up to speak on the item.

The ARR Director provided a report and no action was taken by the Commission.

5. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The following items were discussed as future agenda items: biosolids management issues; budget update; textiles recycling agreement; [re]manufacturing Hub update; OPM review update; Bulk pickup: general updates; staff briefing on URO

ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Joyce, seconded by Commissioner Guidry, and the meeting was adjourned by Chair Acuna at 9:36 pm to no objection.