

Solid Waste Interjurisdictional Technical Staff Work Group
Meeting Summary
December 14, 2005
King Street Center

Meeting Attendees:

City Staff:

Sharon Hlavka – City of Auburn
Alison Bennett – City of Bellevue
Susan Fife-Ferris – City of Bellevue
Rob Van Orsow – City of Federal Way
Elaine Borjeson – City of Kirkland
Linda Knight – City of Renton
Desmond Machuca – City of SeaTac
Frank Iriarte – City of Tukwila
Valarie Jarvi – City of Woodinville

County Staff:

Mike Huddleston – Council Staff
Peggy Sanders – Council Staff
Tom Karston - SWD
Kevin Kiernan - SWD
Theresa Koppang - SWD
Gemma Alexander - SWD

I. Review November Minutes

The November 9th minutes were approved without changes.

II. SWD Update

Kiernan reported that an unidentified customer brought acid into the Factoria Transfer Station last night, and dumped it into the trailer with the rest of their load. Irritating fumes were released that required the station to close at 7:30, disrupting service for the duration of the night shift. Customers were redirected to Bow Lake while the division's emergency response contractor neutralized the acid.

Susan Fife-Ferris of Bellevue asked about the division's response to her request that ITSG discuss labor issues as they relate to the chapter on public/private options. Engineering Services Manager Kevin Kiernan replied that the Prosecuting Attorney's policy is not to share legal opinions outside of the county. Council Staff Peggy Sanders suggested that cities' own legal staff would have experience with this question, and could help to clarify the issues.

ITSG discussed labor issues and the contents of Chapter Three at length. Particular attention was paid to the fact that Clark and Grays Harbor Counties appear to have entirely privatized systems, although the report says this is not an option. Council Staff Mike Huddleston commented that some counties have never operated their own systems, which is a much different legal situation from a county that has. He described attempts to privatize the Washington State Ferry system as an example. Kiernan commented that state law is concerned with public employees, not unions. Solid waste workers are represented by the same union in both the public and private sectors.

Economist Tom Karston commented that long term competitiveness is a fundamental issue and that preserving the County's ability to negotiate in many generations of export related contracts would be highly productive.

City members asked for more information to be included in Chapter Three; including more details on Clark and Grays Harbor Counties, what cost information is and is not available, as well as the risk transfer and accounting treatment aspects of public private partnerships. ITSG requested that Kiernan ask the haulers if the regional direct rate represents their cost for transfer and transport. Kiernan noted that the haulers have agreed with this statement on record at county council meetings, but said that he will ask the question on ITSG's behalf in upcoming meetings with the haulers.

Huddleston volunteered to look into case law on labor issues from the state Attorney General, which is available to the public. He said that it is impossible to draw specific conclusions from the general information, but that if ITSG members can identify specific data or information that is missing, the county will try to get that information.

Kiernan said that Chapter Three is qualitatively different from other chapters. Numerical data of the sort that make up the rest of the report are not available for this topic.

The minutes were approved without changes.

III. Draft 4th Report Discussion

Sharon Hlavka of Auburn asked how long the cities have to submit comments and what format comments should be submitted in. Lead Planner Theresa Koppang replied that originally the partial draft of the report was distributed as a Word file with the intent that comments would be in Track Changes. However, Track Changes uses a huge amount of memory, and as the full draft was developed, one chapter reached 100 MB. The file crashed the division's system. As a result, the division proposes to use the standard comment system developed for the Comp Plan. Cities are asked to formally submit their substantive comments in writing. The division will prepare a responsiveness summary based on the formal comments received.

MSWMAC will meet on January 18th. In order to make changes to the draft in time for that meeting, the division would like to receive the first round of comments by January 10. Koppang added that discussion points can be brought up at any time, up through the February ITSG and MSMWAC meetings, but she emphasized that formal written comments should be submitted as soon as possible to allow the division enough time to make changes.

Alison Bennett of Bellevue asked that Bellevue's name be removed from the description of Package Three. She asked for details on the cost differences between self-haul and full service facilities.

In response to a question, Kiernan said Package Three assumes that all NE Lake Washington commercial waste will go to the mega facility.

Kiernan clarified that in scheduling package implementation, it was assumed that development of new facilities would proceed simultaneously in all geographic areas.

Huddleston noted that some packages include self haul facilities without compactors, which could lower to 80% or less the percent of waste export containers that are compacted. ITSG discussed the implications of these packages. Karston said the analysis accounted for lower capital costs for those facilities as well as the higher operating costs they entail. ITSG discussed the importance of maintaining a long term view that will consider the balance between capital and operating costs over time. A high percentage of uncompacted waste could not only add to the number of short and long haul trips, it could raise long haul rates for all tonnage. Huddleston suggested that capital investments up-front might help reduce and control the unknown future volatility of labor and energy costs involved with waste management.

He suggested that this might negatively affect the pricing we might obtain from the railroads. He also suggested that spending somewhat more in capital up front might help reduce and control the unknown future volatility of labor and energy costs involved with waste management.

Kiernan commented that while separating commercial from self-haul customers at existing stations is problematic, new full service facilities can be designed for complete separation of customer types with less expense than would be required to site and build separate facilities.

ITSG reviewed the operational measures that are taken at transfer stations to increase capacity and the results of the compactor study and physical constraints to rebuilding stations on site.

ITSG encouraged the division to flesh out the factors that distinguish packages from each other.