Solid Waste Interjurisdictional Technical Staff Work Group
March 28, 2007
King Street Center

Meeting Attendees:

City Staff:

Kathleen Edman – City of Auburn
Sharon Hlavka- City of Auburn
Rob Van Orsow – City of Federal Way
Linda Knight – City of Renton
Desmond Machuca – City of SeaTac

County Staff:

Beth Mountsier – Council Staff
Mike Reed – Council Staff
Gemma Alexander – SWD
Jeff Gaisford - SWD
Tom Karston - SWD
Kevin Kiernan – SWD
Josh Marx – SWD
Bill Reed - SWD
Alexander Rist - SWD
Thea Severn - SWD
Bob Tocarciuc - SWD
Diane Yates – SWD

I. Review Agenda and Minutes

Intergovernmental Staff Liaison Diane Yates introduced Bob Tocarciuc, the division's new Planning Supervisor.

City members noted that very few cities were represented at the meeting and commented that those cities not in attendance would miss an important discussion.

The February 28 minutes were approved as submitted.

II. Updates

Waste to Energy

Engineering Services Manager Kevin Kiernan reported on his recent trip to Germany to study solid waste systems there. In five days, the group visited waste to energy (WTE), materials recovery (MRF) and refuse derived fuel (RDF) facilities in three cities. In addition to Kiernan and King County Councilmember Kathy Lambert, the group included one member of Enterprise Seattle, Covanta Energy staff and one consultant from R.W. Beck.

Kiernan noted several significant differences between the German waste management system and our system. Because of a shortage of landfill space that is not a problem in the northwestern United States, Germany has a ban on landfilling untreated waste. Significant producer responsibility laws remove batteries, electronics, vehicles and packaging from the waste stream. Packaging taxes provide a national fund that pays for many solid waste activities. Source separation is standard in Germany, without many of the compliance issues that are faced in the U.S. He noted the Germans have a great deal of faith in their machinery. Air quality tests are only administered during normal operation, and under those conditions achieve 100% compliance. In Germany, plastics are incinerated, not recycled. Organics are composted and the end product is often landfilled.

The facilities have capacities ranging from one third to a little more than half the capacity of King County's system, and have an expected lifespan of about thirty years (less for machinery). All of the facilities toured were part of a solid waste system that continues to rely on transfer stations as an intermediate step to disposal. One of the facilities was at the end of a rail system.

The WTE facilities are capable of recovering chlorine and sulfates. The major air quality issues that plagued incineration in the 1980's have been addressed in the newer designs. Kiernan said the current technology can handle waste in an environmentally sound manner. He said the facilities he toured were very impressive. The privately owned and operated Alba MRF was very clean and high tech. It cost 18 million Euros [$24 million], and is operated on a three year contract. One WTE facility with tile floors and in the offices, wood paneling, cost €400 million [$534 million] when it was built five years ago.

The cost to dispose of one ton of garbage at Cedar Hills landfill is $32 (the tipping fee of $82.50 includes transfer, transport and recycling programs, in addition to disposal). This is comparable to the cost of landfilling in Germany, which is €20 per ton [$27]. The cost of incineration at the Cologne WTE facility is between €130-145 [$174-$194]. The German Green Party, which advocates for WTE, estimates the cost of incineration at €150 [$200].

Kiernan said the primary challenges in the U.S. are related to cost and siting. Even in Germany, it is difficult to site waste to energy facilities. Waste to energy is more affordable in Germany in part because energy costs are higher than in the U.S. Locally, energy costs five to seven cents per kilowatt hour.

About one third of the energy produced supports facility operations. The German facilities tend to be paired with industrial facilities, such as ports or auto manufacturers that use the process steam from the WTE facility. Seattle has Seattle Steam, but there are no industrial steam users in King County.

In the U.S. fly ash is classified as hazardous waste because of its high pH, and is combined with bottom ash to reduce its toxicity. In Germany, fly ash is used to fill in old salt mines, a use that is considered recycling. The Germans use bottom ash in construction. It is not clear whether that would be possible here. In Florida, facilities were unable to find a market for bottom ash.

Germany achieves a very high environmental outcome from its waste system by requiring a lot of effort up front. National policy requires source separation and extensive product stewardship. It is not clear how that would transfer to a county system.

R.W. Beck will present an introduction to waste to energy technologies at MSWMAC's April meeting. In May, the committees will see a draft of the consultant's budget proviso report that is due on July 31. In June, committees will have the opportunity to comment on the report, which will be submitted in July.

Housekeeping
Yates reported that a member of the Vashon Island Unincorporated Area Council has attended a SWAC meeting and has indicated interest in a position on SWAC.

Rob Van Orsow of Federal Way thanked the division for reorganizing the links to planning document on its webpage. He commented that he had had trouble finding some of the reports on the division's web page. The planning documents are posted at: http://www.metrokc.gov/dnrp/swd/about/planning/documents-planning.asp
The Governance Report will be added to that page as well.

Council staff Beth Mountsier reported that RPC will have a briefing on the governance report at its meeting on April 11. Mountsier said she would be calling city members of ITSG to ask for one or members to attend the meeting and participate in the briefing.

Council staff Mike Reed said the third party review contract has been approved at the committee level and is on Council's consent agenda next week. Council staff expect to conduct interviews with committee members in early May. The review is expected to be completed in July.

Linda Knight of Renton will give the ITSG update at the next MSWMAC meeting.

III. Comp Plan
Tocarciuc presented the draft schedule for the Comp Plan. He said that the Comp Plan schedule is a working document and is subject to change as work proceeds. While there is some flexibility in the schedule, in order to complete the Comp Plan by December 2008, longer meetings may be required. It is also important to note that the Comp Plan will not be the only business on the agenda. At some point, governance issues will also require meetings and time on the agenda.

ITSG members agreed that longer meetings are preferable to additional meetings. Yates will try to reserve the conference room for four hours. Meetings will be longer or shorter as needed.

The fourth Wednesdays in November and December are around the holidays, so those meetings will need to be rescheduled.

It was noted that the product stewardship discussion is missing from the schedule and needs to be added.

Waste Prevention and Recycling
Recycling and Environmental Services Manager Jeff Gaisford said that ITSG and SWAC have both given input into identifying the type of criteria that should be used to evaluate recycling program options for the Comp Plan. He presented a handout listing those criteria with proposed definitions of what the criteria mean.

ITSG reviewed an existing consultant's model for quantifying environmental impact. Because the model is pre-existing, it is not as expensive as performing a complete life cycle analysis from scratch. Division economist Tom Karston said that financial values

for externalized costs are not uniformly accepted. However, the public sector has a responsibility to look beyond immediate costs to the broader impacts and social consequences of program decisions. Models like the one presented are already commonly used in transportation planning.

Van Orsow asked if there is a political risk to bringing global warming into the planning process. Gaisford responded that the division has so far only referred to environmental impact generally, and is now asking for input from stakeholders on how environmental impact should be measured. That input will define the scope of this criterion.

ITSG discussed the concept of savings from avoided disposal cost. Karston said that this is much greater than it would appear at face value.

ITSG members agreed that when this material is presented to MSWMAC, specific examples should be used, and elements that will not be part of the analysis should be removed. Also, because MSWMAC members will not be as familiar with the consultant that developed the environmental impact model, his background and qualifications should be presented when the model is introduced.

Mountsier commented that policy makers will also want to see a financial bottom line that clearly states the goal and the investment required to achieve it.

Next Steps
MSWMAC's next agenda will include the Comp Plan schedule and recycling program criteria, as well as an hour for the WTE briefing.

The next ITSG meeting is scheduled for April 25.