

MEETING MINUTES

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY SOLID WASTE ADVISORY GROUP (SWAG)

May 11, 2023

ATTENDANCE

SWAG Members:

Present: Richard "Buck" Arvin, James Gestrich, Ned Greene, Will Linter, Joel Becker, Tiziana Bottino, Jane Wyman

Absent: Virginia Douglas, Mark Bonner, Harry Glasgow, Keisha Strand, Lynn Meadows,

Solid Waste Division Staff: Roscoe Coles, Monica Gorman, Deborah Campbell

Guests: None

OPENING

Ms. Gorman called the meeting of the Solid Waste Advisory Group (SWAG) to order at 7:04 p.m. via Microsoft Teams.

AGENDA TOPICS

INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. Gorman welcomed everyone to the meeting via Microsoft Teams. No guests or visitors were present.

APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Gorman introduced the new SWAG member, Joel Becker, of the Brentsville District, who was appointed on March 21st, 2023.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A quorum was present. The draft minutes of the March 9, 2023, SWAG meeting were approved. Ms. Gorman noted that the minutes of past meetings have been posted online.

OPERATIONAL UPDATES

Landfill Operations

Mr. Coles noted that the first lift in the new cell will likely be completed next week.

Mr. Coles discussed the ongoing attempts to fill position vacancies at the Landfill.

Regarding traffic backups to Rt. 234 on Saturdays, a new traffic pattern will begin this Saturday, May 13, 2023. The plan alters the existing one inbound and one outbound lane near the stop sign at the ball fields by converting to two inbound lanes to alleviate the traffic on Rt. 234 waiting to enter the Landfill.

The Residential Convenience Center has an average of 200 customers every hour on Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The issue is at Traffic Control, where staff is checking IDs to verify County residency.

Mr. Linter asked about HHW on Wednesdays as a traffic flow issue. Mr. Coles answered that there is only a rare backup when a resident does not announce they are bringing HHW and enters the lane without obtaining a ticket first.

Compost Facility Operations

Ms. Gorman noted there is a backlog of material awaiting processing by the vendor. The vendor has staffing and equipment issues as factors impacting the backlog. There have been a few small fires on site, which is an ongoing concern with the size of the backlog of material. The vendor is working through the material as swiftly as possible based on their staffing and equipment constraints. They have historically cleared spring backlogs by summer.

Recycling/Diversion Programs

Ms. Campbell discussed the recent Compost Awareness Day that occurred at the Compost Facility on Saturday, May 6, 2023. Approximately 50 attendees participated in the event hosted by the County and the Compost Facility vendor, Freestate Farms. Attendees were invited to participate in one of the two tours of the facility, speak with Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners, or learn more about Keep Prince William Beautiful. Attendees were also offered free samples of compost as part of the "Bring Your Own Bucket" event.

Ms. Campbell noted the County is working with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's Recycling Program on their battery management campaign, which started in April 2023. This is a public education/outreach campaign about the dangers of improper battery disposal.

Ms. Campbell mentioned the upcoming paper shredding event in May. The event will be held at the Pfitzner Stadium from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, May 20, 2023.

Ms. Bottino asked about recycling shredded paper. Ms. Campbell responded that documents shredded as part of a Prince William County Shred Event are recycled, but if a citizen shreds documents at home, they should be placed in the regular trash.

Ms. Bottino requested a copy of the Shred Event virtual flyer. Ms. Campbell agreed to provide it by email.

PROJECT UPDATES

Division Staffing

Ms. Gorman reported that since the SWAG met in March, the Division has had a few more announced retirements, a key administrative position resignation, and no new hires.

Recruitment efforts are ongoing for the Administrative Specialist, Administrative Coordinator, Senior Business Services Analyst, Compost Facility Supervisor, Roll-off Crew Supervisor, an Assistant Superintendent at the Landfill, two Scalehouse Operators, and a Maintenance Worker.

Ms. Gorman noted that since the County closed the Landfill on Sundays, it has been easier to recruit for key Landfill vacancies. Compared to the rest of the Division, which is currently staffed between 60-70%, the Landfill is staffed at 90% capacity.

Adopted FY24 Solid Waste Division Budget

Ms. Gorman reported that the Board of County Supervisors adopted the FY24 Budget on April 25, 2023. The FY24 Budget can be found online, with Public Works details starting on page 94 of the PDF.

Ms. Gorman showed an extract from the accepted budget. She emphasized that Solid Waste is entirely fee-funded. After remaining unchanged since 1998, the Solid Waste Division requested a fee increase. The Solid Waste fund was projected to be depleted by 2025 with the current \$70 annual fee per single-family household. As a result of cost increases primarily related to construction, labor, new environmental programs, and reduced recycling revenues, the current fee structure is insufficient to cover operating expenses and future construction and closure costs, such as the Landfill's Phase IV infrastructure costs. The total Capital Improvement Plan is estimated at \$200 million over the next 20 years. To address these shortfalls, the Division recommended an increase in the SFE for the Solid Waste Management Fee on the property tax bill from \$70 to \$75, which was approved by the Board of County Supervisors. The Board also approved the implementation of a landfill disposal fee for commercial haulers (also known as a tipping fee) of \$40 per ton to begin January 1, 2024.

The Board also approved the budget initiative for the Solid Waste Landfill Phase IV Design and Permitting at \$750,000.

The Board also asked staff to increase litter control and approved a budget increase of \$650,000 for contracted services.

Mr. Linter asked about the tipping fee – what is it? Ms. Gorman explained it is one of the fees collected at the Scalehouse per ton of disposal. The change is that Prince William is starting to charge commercial and businesses for disposal of regular refuse, which was previously not charged; residents will still pay no tipping fee. Mr. Linter asked a second question – residential trash is not included, so is there no increase in fees charged by haulers to the residents? Ms. Gorman said that this information will be covered in Ms. Campbell's presentation later in the meeting.

Mr. Becker noted that it was very commendable how long the Division maintained the \$70 fee. He said that while no one likes seeing a fee increase, it is due. He further commented that the limited increase is well done.

Mr. Gestrich had a question about the commercial groups and small vans disposing of construction materials. This sparked a discussion of customers attempting to avoid the tipping fee by disposing of debris as residents. Mr. Coles stated that all businesses, including the contractors, will be charged the \$40 tipping fee. Mr. Gestrich noted that he had seen vans with construction debris going to the residential disposal area. Mr. Coles commented that staff pays attention to who comes by regularly to dispose of materials, so they are more effectively able to identify a resident versus a business

customer. Ms. Gorman verified Mr. Gestrich identified a risk with the tipping fee. Mr. Gestrich agreed that the staff is very good at directing people to the proper disposal locations. Still, he has seen several vans dispose of copious amounts of construction debris in the residential area. Ms. Gorman noted that the staff asks about the point of origin for everyone entering and must use their best judgment, but staff has also been advised not to argue with customers.

Draft Communication Plan for FY24 Solid Waste Fee Changes

Ms. Campbell gave a slide presentation on the Fee Increase Draft Communication/Outreach Plan (presentation attached). Following are Ms. Campbell's talking points for each slide.

Slide 1 – Title slide, "Fee Increase Draft Communication/Outreach Plan"

Slide 2 – As Ms. Gorman mentioned, the fee changes address two fees: the Solid Waste Fee and the Tipping Fee. The Solid Waste Fee is not new; it has been charged annually to property owners, both residential and commercial. The Division will also be implementing the Tipping Fee for refuse brought in by commercial haulers and businesses at the Landfill.

Slide 3 – The annual Solid Waste Fee increase will take effect on the July 2023 bills. Ms. Campbell offered a reminder that the fee is partially charged twice a year, with half charged in July and half in December. The fee is charged based on the type of residential dwelling or business use. Single-family homes will see a charge of \$75, up from \$70, and businesses will be charged based on a Single-Family Equivalent, also at a charge of \$75, up from \$70. As for smaller homes, such as Townhomes, Mobile Homes, and Condos and Apartments, they are prorated at a lower rate than the Single-Family Equivalent. Regarding businesses, their fees are based on a formula that considers the type of business, the square footage of the facility, and the amount of waste generated multiplied by the Single-Family Equivalent. Ms. Campbell noted that the fee has not changed since it was established by the Board of County Supervisors in December 1998 and implemented on January 1, 1999, at \$70, which is equivalent to \$120-\$125 today with inflation.

Slide 4 – The Tipping Fee for business and commercial trash will start in January 2024. Before the annual Solid Waste Fee was implemented in 1999, Prince William County had a tipping fee. The new Tipping Fee will be applicable only to business and commercial refuse. The new fee will be \$40 per ton and will take effect January 1, 2024. Ms. Campbell emphasized that commercial collectors may decide to pass on increased disposal costs to customers (HOAs, businesses, and residents). Ms. Campbell noted that the average tipping fees among other counties in the area range between \$62 to \$70, while the average in the US is \$54.

Slide 5 – The target focus for media outreach will be on the tipping fee. The targeted audience will be permitted haulers, Solid Waste account holders, HOAs and Condo Managers (HOA/property management companies), and Apartment Managers, as well as any businesses affected by contract management. Ms. Campbell asked for ideas and resources to reach out to these groups regarding the new tipping fee.

Slide 6 – The outreach tools previously used by the County include the webpage, where the whole range of information regarding the changes can be made available along with frequently asked questions; a webinar, either live participation or a recording and posted online for further outreach and referral; direct mail, a letter to target audiences about the fee increase and an invitation to attend the webinar; media releases to the local papers, radio, and television stations; County

Communications, to include social media, the newsletter, GovDelivery, and PWC Alerts; and signage at the Landfill to let people know when it is going to be implemented. Other possibilities could include paid advertisements or working with the PWC Chamber through their outreach vehicles to notify businesses of the change. Ms. Campbell asked for other communication tools to consider.

Slide 7 – Message highlights will be very important; the Division wants to address the areas that will spark community questions. Areas already identified are the necessity and benefits of the Solid Waste Fee Increase, the history of the Solid Waste Annual Fee, and the fee comparison in today's dollars. As for the tipping fee, the messaging will address the necessity to construct landfill space, the possibility of an increase in the service cost charged by private haulers, a comparison to other Northern Virginia jurisdictions and the national fee, and how the fee may serve as encouragement to haulers to keep recycling and yard waste separate from trash. Ms. Campbell notes she wants to include other messaging brought up by the SWAG members if provided.

Slide 8 – Invitation to discuss the presentation. Ms. Gorman brought up the background of the yard waste initiative, which involved the adoption of regulations that required residential yard waste to be collected separately from trash in order to increase diversion. There was subsequently some negative feedback from HOAs that the impact of the yard waste program was that many haulers increased their fees. Ms. Campbell is aiming to make a more robust outreach plan for the tipping fee change in order to reach the more difficult-to-contact communities.

Mr. Gestrich stated the slide presentation was excellent at explaining the changes and outreach plan. He shared several questions. He asked for verification that the people coming through the scalehouse are regular customers. Upon confirmation by Ms. Gorman, he wondered if it would be possible to hand out flyers. He also asked if there is an electronic list of people who regularly use the landfill. Ms. Gorman stated there is no such list, but there is a list of commercial haulers and business account holders, who will be notified by mail with an insert along with their bill. She noted, however, that there are customers who pay by credit card at the scales, who will need to be notified by signage as suggested by Ms. Campbell on Slide 6. Mr. Gestrich asked if there was any communication by email. Ms. Campbell noted that PWC Alerts is an opt-in communication system that can send residents an email if they have signed up. She also stated she has an extensive email list of residents who have attended previous Solid Waste events, which she can use to reach out to residents. Mr. Gestrich asked if it would be possible to reach out to the president or vice president of the HOAs by email with the "Mark as Read" option. Ms. Campbell noted that this is an area of communication breakdown since the County does not require registration of HOAs. Ms. Campbell elaborated that HOA representatives self-report and self-identify. The Division reached out by mail and email based on the contact information provided by the representative, but that representative did not always share with representatives in charge of the hauler contracts. When implementing the new outreach, Ms. Campbell notes the Division aims to do a better job of emphasizing the contract officer for the HOA may want to reach out to their hauling company. Mr. Gestrich said he would brainstorm ideas and reach out to other people for ideas; he will pass along any ideas for the communications outreach.

Mr. Becker noted that social-media savvy SWAG members could share the communication documentation on Facebook communities. He also expressed concern about a potential increase in individuals taking their trash to the landfill on their own due to the increase in hauler fees.

Mr. Linter suggested Ms. Campbell contact the County Extension Agency and other community-involved sectors of the County that will have contact information for the HOAs.

Ms. Gorman noted the presentation would be sent out to SWAG members.

SWAG MEMBER GENERAL QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Mr. Gestrich asked about the discussion last year regarding the life of the landfill and the impact of the new building developments approved by the County. Ms. Gorman stated the County does not accept commercial loads of construction waste, only small loads from residential customers. The landfill life is impacted by the amount of solid waste disposed by the community; that amount varies annually and is impacted by economic health and population growth. Ms. Gorman reports that the Division plans for population growth in the annual projections.

Mr. Becker asked about the tipping fees after storms with yard waste and if those disposal loads will be impacted. Ms. Gorman noted that only the commercial trash fee structure is changing, and for the most part, the Landfill does not charge for yard waste.

ADJOURNMENT and NEXT MEETING

The next SWAG meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 13, 2023, at 7:00 p.m.

Ms. Gorman adjourned the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

Attachments:

- Presentation on Fee Increase Draft Communication/Outreach Plan



PRINCE WILLIAM
COUNTY

Fee Increase Draft Communication/Outreach Plan

Solid Waste Advisory Group (SWAG) Presentation

May 11, 2023

A Tale of Two Fees

Solid Waste Fee

- Property owners (residential and commercial)

Tipping Fee

- Refuse brought in by commercial haulers and businesses



A Tale of Two Fees – Solid Waste Fee

Solid Waste Fee

- Property owners
 - Charged on the real estate tax bills
 - Based on the type of residential dwelling or business use
 - Single-Family Home/SF Equivalent increased from \$70/SFE to \$75/SFE annually
 - Billed semi-annually with real estate tax payments
 - Bills issued in June/July 2023 will reflect the increase
 - Solid Waste Fee for Townhomes, Mobile Homes, and Condos/Apartments are prorated less than the SFE

A Tale of Two Fees – New Tipping Fee

New Landfill Tipping Fee

- Applicable to commercial refuse (other fees remain unchanged)
- New fee of \$40/ton; currently, no tipping fee is being charged
- Fee takes effect on January 1, 2024
- Commercial collectors may pass on increased disposal costs to customers (HOAs, businesses, residents)

Target Audiences and Fee Focus

Tipping Fee Focus

- Permitted haulers
- Solid Waste account holders
- HOAs and Condo Managers (HOA/property management companies)
- Apartment Managers

Ideas and resources to help reach these groups?



Outreach Tools

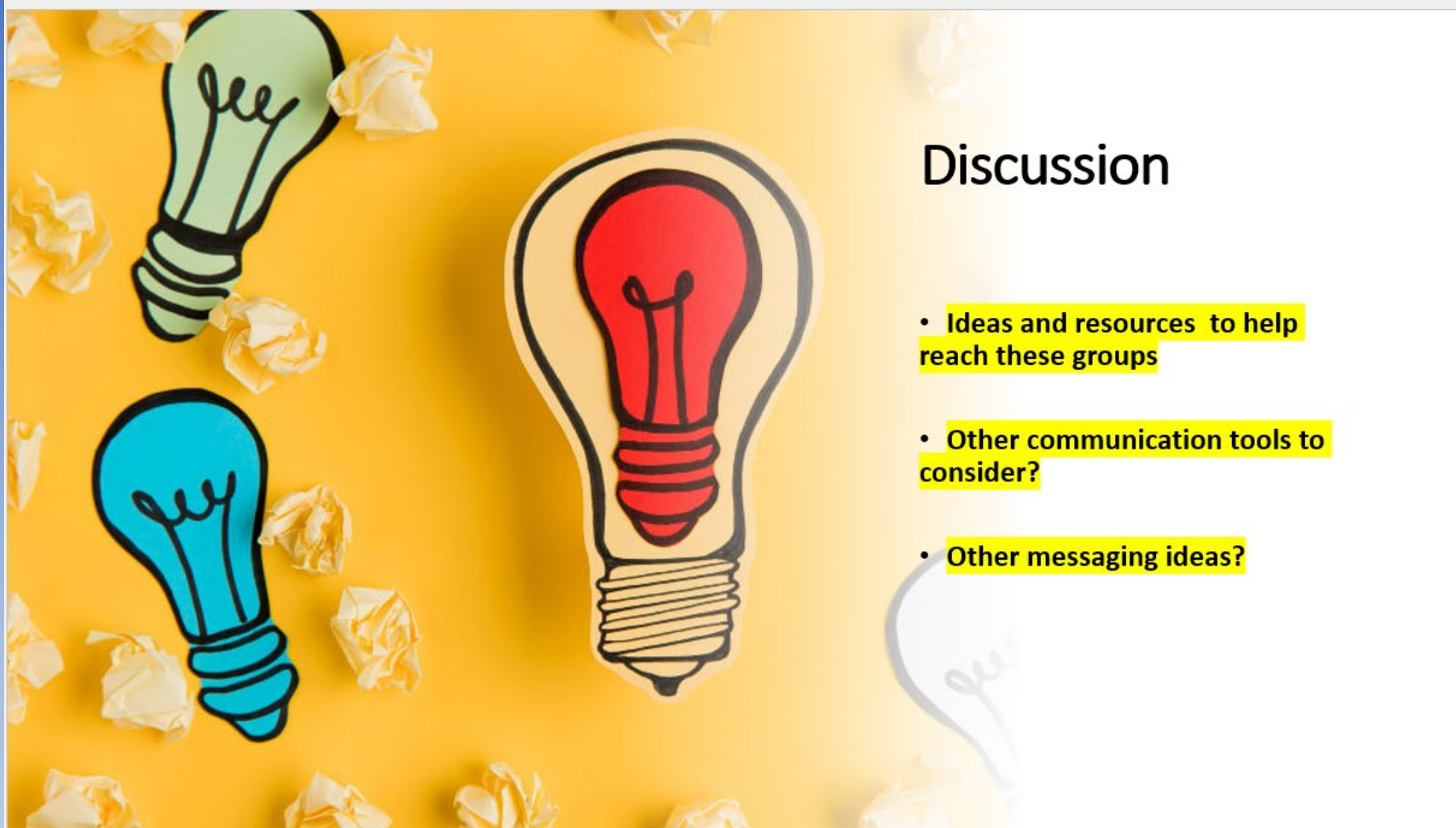
- Webpage with fee information, services provided, purpose of fee changes, FAQs, recorded webinars, etc.
- Webinars for target audiences
- Direct mail to target audiences with fee increase and webinar invitation
- Media releases
- County Communication tools -social media, newsletter, GovDelivery, PWC Alerts, etc.
- Signage at Landfill (tipping fee)
- Other options: paid advertisements, PWC Chamber outreach
- **Other communication tools to consider?**



Messaging Highlights

- **Solid Waste Fee Increase**
 - Necessity and its benefits
 - History
 - Fee index comparison
- **Tipping Fee Implementation**
 - Necessary to construct landfill space
 - May result in service cost increase charged by private haulers
 - Comparison to other NoVA jurisdictions
 - Encourages haulers to keep recycling and yard waste separate from trash
- **Other Messaging**
 - Additional details on the website
 - **Other messaging topics?**





Discussion

- Ideas and resources to help reach these groups
- Other communication tools to consider?
- Other messaging ideas?