

**APPROVED MINUTES OF A  
HAMILTON COUNTY SOLID WASTE  
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING  
In person & Zoom**

**DATE:** September 21, 2022

**TIME:** 3:00 p.m.

**PLACE:** Hamilton County Environmental Services  
250 William Howard Taft Road, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45219

[Virtual meeting recording can be viewed here.](#)

**PRESENT:** **Policy Committee Members**  
Tony DiPuccio, Generator Representative  
Denise Driehaus, County Commissioner, Chair  
Bob Gedert, Public Member  
Greg Kesterman, Hamilton County Public Health Representative  
Sue Magness, Largest Municipality Representative  
Domonique Peebles, General Interest Member  
Matt Wahlert, Township Representative

**Staff**

Michelle Balz, Solid Waste Manager  
Gage Bradford, Community Specialist  
Mary Copenbaker, Assistant Manager  
Ashley Dove, Fiscal Analyst  
Elise Erhart, Outreach Specialist  
Brad Johnson, Director  
Ali Khodadad, Operations Manager  
Mike Kramer, Assistant Director  
Joy Landry, Communications Specialist  
Cher Mohring, Community Outreach Coordinator  
Susan Schumacher, Assistant Solid Waste Specialist, Clerk

**Others in Attendance**

Michelle Ackenhausen, Ohio EPA  
Stephanie Bradford, Cincinnati Recycling and Reuse Hub  
Chet Chaney, Ohio EPA  
Nee Fong Chin, Prosecutor's Office  
Sally Dannemiller, Sierra Club – Miami Group  
Chuck DeJonckheere, Hamilton County Public Health  
Dean Ferrier, Rumpke  
Ruth Hardy  
Marie Kocoshis, League of Women Voters  
Gerri Kraus, Public  
Jennifer Wright Linz  
Karen Luken, EESI  
Tim Mara, Oxbow  
Lori McMullin  
Colleen McSwiggin, Cincinnati Recycling and Reuse Hub

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Rich McVay  
Jeanne Nightingale  
Jim O'Reilly, Individual  
Owner  
Deputy Bryan Peak, Hamilton County Sheriff's Office  
Kevin Tighe, Hamilton County  
Declan Tom, Cincinnati CM Jeffreys  
Monica Windholtz, Cincinnati CM Owens  
Lisa Wynn, Ditch the Dump  
Molly Yeager, Rumpke

**1. INTRODUCTION/OPENING COMMENTS**

Ms. Driehaus called the meeting to order at 3:02 pm and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

**2. CLERK'S REPORT**

Ms. Driehaus entertained a motion to approve the August 17, 2022 minutes. Mr. Kesterman moved to approve the minutes as corrected; Mr. Wahlert seconded. Mr. Gedert and Ms. Magness recused themselves from the vote. Everyone else in favor and the minutes were approved as corrected.

**3. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Nine public comments were given.

**4. REVENUE UPDATES/ANALYSIS**

Ms. Balz gave a summary of the revenue report.

Mr. Gedert discussed out-of-district waste being between 54 and 57 percent since January and in January did note that this is something that should be looked at in the Plan Update since the majority of revenue is coming from out-of-district waste.

Ms. Magness stated that we received a memo regarding the conflict of interest and asked when the Committee was going to discuss that. Ms. Driehaus stated that it could be discussed at the end of the meeting.

**5. POLICY COMMITTEE ITEMS**

**a. Hamilton County Solid Waste Plan Update**

- i. Timeline – Ms. Balz gave a presentation on the Plan Update timeline. Ms. Balz showed two timelines and explained the differences and asked the Committee to recommend one to staff. Ms. Driehaus entertained a motion to approve the preferred Plan Update timeline. Mr. Wahlert moved; Mr. Kesterman seconded. All in favor and the motion was approved.
- ii. Universal Waste, Recycling, and Composting – Mr. Gedert summarized this and the Fee Increase. After discussion, it was decided to wait for the Prosecutor's opinion to see if the Universal Waste, Recycling, and Composting was under the authority of the Policy Committee and/or the Board of County Commissioners.

Ms. Driehaus suggested to wait for the opinion and if the opinion says that the Policy Committee and the Board of County Commissioners does have authority, then authorize Ms. Balz to follow-up on behalf of the Policy Committee and ask those follow-up questions of 1) Is there any interest from the Sheriff to enforce this and 2) Would the Prosecutor's office prosecute offenders.

Mr. Kesterman stated that if it comes back that we can adopt a policy, he would be curious if other communities have experienced what Ms. Magness has shared. The City of Cincinnati, which does have universal trash collection, has seen an increase in open dumping.

Ms. Luken stated that this is a valid point and that 80 percent of the open dumping and litter complaints that Environmental Enforcement receives, comes from the City of Cincinnati who has universal trash collection. There needs to be more analysis before motions are drawn up.

A brief discussion ensued.

Ms. Luken introduced herself and stated that she does not work for Rumpke and that she works all over the world designing recycling programs, designing composting programs, and does work with World Bank as Ms. Hardy brought up.

Ms. Luken gave an overview of the planning process.

Ms. Luken stated that she is happy to say that OEPA commends the District for its efforts to thoroughly evaluate its programming through the analysis in Appendix H.

Ms. Luken stated that there was quite a bit of comment about organics and food waste and the Plan has extensive conversation about developing the public/private partnership for a centralized composting facility. The Plan also talks about helping community composting over the next five years which OEPA also complimented the District.

OEPA also complemented the District with working with townships on moving from subscription recycling to contract. A big difference in what Ms. Luken is hearing today is not taking a mandated required approach with the townships with collection.

Ms. Luken stated that she wanted to share a little bit because what she was hearing today was definitely did not reflect the work of Ms. Balz's team and the inclusion of the public throughout this process.

iii. Fee Increase

Mr. Gedert stated that the fee structure proposal is to increase the Tier II, out-of-district but in-state fee structure from two dollars to four dollars.

Mr. Gedert stated that there were a couple of ways to approach this and summarized Attachment C in the Policy Packet.

Mr. Gedert stated that the purpose of raising the out-of-district fee is based on current disposal records, more than 52% of the waste disposed in the District is from Tier 2 Out of District waste flows (May 2022 Tipping Fee Report). As the District engages in waste reduction and diversion activities to reduce reliance on landfilling, the capacity of the local landfill is greatly reduced due to out-of-district waste flows into the County. The current capacity of the Rumpke landfill is 23 years (noted in Appendix M). To protect landfill capacity for Hamilton County residents, this extra fee on Tier Two is intended to create an incentive to reduce waste flows from out of district.

There is the intent NOT to raise Tier 1 and Tier 3 fees, as there is a requirement to ratify this Plan through the local townships and municipalities. We do not wish to raise the tax load on local communities within Hamilton County.

Mr. Gedert stated that the second purpose is that the extra revenues from this \$2/ton increase on Tier Two is estimated to raise \$2.48 million annually.

Ms. Magness stated that the City of Cincinnati Administration supports this, and several council members are on board with this. We have the lowest landfill costs there are around the United States and feels that Hamilton County has become the dumping ground.

Mr. Kesterman stated that the Plan Update has to be ratified by the communities and he wondered if staff has done any work with the entirety of the 48 communities to know if we would get 24 to say that they would support it.

Mr. Kesterman stated he would challenge that a two dollar jump, even though this is being proposed in 2024, is a huge one-time increase. If this community at some point entertains it, he would be more palatable to \$0.50 over a certain number of years.

Mr. Kesterman stated he would like to see the fee increase be analyzed to bring feedback to the Committee which then can set the policy after the administrative staff have shared their opinions.

Ms. Magness stated that she did not think the City would approve it without the fee increase.

Ms. Luken stated that as your consultant, we need to look at other districts that are sitting on a border of another state to see if they raised their fees, what happened to waste flows. Because what was not mentioned, in a worst case scenario, out-of-district Ohio waste goes to Kentucky or Indiana and the Kentucky or Indiana waste comes to Rumpke which would not save any landfill space and now, instead of two dollars a ton, the district is only getting one dollar per ton.

Ms. Luken stated that a sensitivity analysis is needed of how these waste flows are affected before raising fees.

Ms. Magness stated that the City is more interested in a staggered increase. Mr. Gedert stated that he favors the \$0.50 over four years. Mr. Kesterman stated that it is important to have the City and all other communities to agree.

Mr. Gedert stated that the ratification is percentage of population; not count of communities.

Mr. Gedert stated that he recognizes there is not votes to support this concept at this moment. He would like the Committee's consideration on this topic at a future meeting.

Mr. Gedert stated that he would like a motion that is separate and distinctly different than what was originally proposed in Attachment C of the Policy Committee Packet.

Mr. Gedert moved that the Hamilton County Solid Waste Management District Policy Committee request District staff to contract for a financial analysis and a programmatic analysis on what would happen if Tier II fees were changed under the following scenarios:

- Tier II fee raised two dollars effective January 1, 2024

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- Tier II fee raised 1 dollar effective January 1, 2024 and one dollar effective January 1, 2025
- Tier II fee raised \$0.50 effective January 1, 2024 and each of the following three years for a total of two dollars.

Furthermore, the report due back to the Policy Committee and its January 2023 meeting for discussion.

Mr. Gedert stated that the reason he picked that date was because it fits in with the timeline.

Ms. Driehaus stated she would like to hear from staff on that timeline. Ms. Balz stated that she would lean on Ms. Luken since she is our contractor for the Plan Update.

Mr. DiPuccio stated that he did not understand the study Mr. Gedert is talking about and what the scope of programmatic is because it so broad and general. Mr. Gedert asked Ms. Luken if she understood. Ms. Luken stated that she would approach it differently and gave a short summary.

A brief discussion ensued about waste flows.

Mr. Gedert restated his motion to say that he moved that the Hamilton County Solid Waste Management District Policy Committee request District staff to contract for financial analysis and a programmatic analysis on what would happen if Tier II fees were changed for saving landfill space. In addition to that we would like ideas as to how to divert waste and look at composting. Furthermore, the report is due back to the Policy Committee at its March 2023 meeting for discussion.

Mr. Wahlert seconded. All in favor and the motion was approved.

A brief discussion ensued regarding Mr. Gedert remaining on the Policy Committee for another term.

**b. 2023 Waste Characterization Study**

Ms. Balz stated that it has been five years since our last residential waste sort with the last one being in 2018 so we would be on schedule if we do it every five years in 2023. Ms. Balz stated that this was included on the agenda because there have been other discussions on how to spend carry-over dollars, but this is timely for the budget office if we are able to add \$150,000 into our budget.

Ms. Balz stated that she believes the waste sort would be very helpful to support the work that we are doing to try to see where we are at, if we reduced certain waste streams, and identify possible new waste streams. There are many opportunities coming our way to work with Ohio State University on food waste and the Recycling Partnership on curbside.

Ms. Balz stated it is good timing also to do some of these waste audits. Staff would like to look at innovative ways and not just do the same old thing and gave examples.

Ms. Balz stated that the staff recommendation is to set aside \$150,000 for the 2023 budget for waste characterization studies.

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Mr. Gedert agreed and suggested a recycling characterization study as well for the material going to the MRF and discussed the reasons why. Ms. Balz stated that something similar was done in 2019 and worked with the City and twelve other communities.

The Committee discussed conducting another recycling characterization study and Ms. Driehaus suggested altering the amount staff requested not to exceed \$225,000 to include both studies.

Ms. Driehaus moved that staff conducts waste characterization study and incorporates recycling into that study at a cost not to exceed \$225,000. Mr. Kesterman seconded. All were in favor and the motion was approved.

**6. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

Ms. Balz stated that the Committee could accept these as written in the Manager's Memo but did want to mention that R3Source has a household hazardous products collection event coming up which will be a two-day event. Staff expanded it to try and accommodate more residents.

The event dates are Friday, October 21 and Saturday, October 22, 2022.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the Environmental Enforcement Program.

Conflict of Interest:

Ms. Magness discussed the lack of a legal opinion regarding the conflict of interest for Mr. DiPuccio. Ms. Magness moved that Ms. Balz request an opinion related to Mr. DiPuccio's appointment, waive privilege once it is received and then the Policy Committee receives access to it. Mr. Pebbles seconded. Mr. DiPuccio abstained. All else in favor and the motion was approved.

**7. UPCOMING DISTRICT MEETINGS**

The next Policy Committee meeting will be Wednesday, November 16, 2022 at 3:00 p.m. at Hamilton County Environmental Services, 250 William Howard Taft Road, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Cincinnati, Ohio 45219.

**8. ADJOURNMENT (Target Time – 4:30 p.m.)**

Mr. Kesterman moved adjournment. Mr. Wahlert seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 5:02 p.m.