

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

SOLID WASTE RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MARCH 28, 2002 MINUTES

PRESENT: Councillor Reg Rankin, Chair
Councillor Jim Smith
Councillor Gary Meade
Councillor Gary Hines
Councillor Dawn Sloane

STAFF: Mr. Brian Smith, Director of Solid Waste Resources
Mr. Jim Bauld, Diversion Planning Coordinator
Ms. Laurie Lewis, Collection & Processing Coordinator
Ms. Sherryll Murphy, Assistant Municipal Clerk
Mr. Kurt Pyle, Planner

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1. CALL TO ORDER AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m.

At the suggestion of the Chair, round room introductions were made.

The following items were added to the agenda:

- 7.1 Motion of Peninsula Community Council - Reprieve Day re Accumulation of Household Waste

MOVED by Councillor Hines, seconded by Councillor Meade that the agenda, as amended, be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - February 14, 2002

MOVED by Councillor Hines, seconded by Councillor Meade that the minutes of February 14, 2002 be approved. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Glen Lane, Canadian Waste, addressed the Committee expressing concern that at least two of the contractors collecting residential waste did not have the required bid bond for one zone. He noted that the specifications of the tender required that those companies bidding provide a bid bond equal to three months operation for each contracted area. Mr. Lake indicated that he was seeking fair treatment for his company and the industry.

The Chair noted that correspondence in this regard has been received and as the matter was a contract item, the Committee intended to deal with it in camera.

It was agreed that Item 6.1, Review of Draft Time Line re C&D Waste Management Strategy, be dealt with at this time.

6. NEW BUSINESS

6.1 Review of Draft Time re C&D Waste Management Strategy

- A draft time line of meetings toward bringing the C&D Waste Management Strategy to Council for public hearing was before the Committee for consideration.

Mr. Bauld briefly reviewed the schedule noting that this round of meetings were the last component to the C&D Waste Management Strategy implementation.

Note was made that May 16, 2002 would be a more suitable date to report to the Committee.

Mr. Bauld indicated that he would contact Mr. Pyle with regard to the possibility of moving to the 16th of May.

In response to a question from the Committee, Mr. Bauld indicated that only three companies had met the deadline set by Council as being permitted to be considered under the present process. Those companies are: Halifax C&D, RDM Recycling and Metro Construction.

4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

4.1 Use of Biodegradable Bags in HRM Residential Organics Program, Presentations and Discussion

Mr. Alan Schnare, Atlantic Compostable Products, utilizing a Power Point presentation, presented the biobag, a biodegradable bag produced by Polar Gruppen in Norway. A copy of this presentation is on file.

Concluding his presentation, Mr. Schnare made the following two recommendations:

- Halifax Regional Municipality should establish a standard for compostable bags used in the solid waste composting system
- To meet residential concerns and improve the acceptance of the recycling program, compostable bags that meet the standard should be allowed in the composting process

In response to a question from Councillor Hines regarding cost effectiveness of the biobag, Mr. Schnare indicated that as is usually the case with environmentally friendly products, the biobag is more expensive.

Mr. George South, Miller Waste, addressed the Committee noting that his presentation included a brief overview of composting at Miller, the impacts of the bags presently being handled and the potential impact on Miller Composting and HRM should the bags be introduced to the residential stream. Mr. South, also utilizing a Power Point presentation, over viewed the composting process at Miller.

Referring to the impact of bags on the system, Mr. South indicated that bags cause an excessive amount of maintenance problems particularly in relation to the bearings, shredder, paddle and star screen. Some batches of bags break down, while subsequent batches do not. Illustrating with pictures, Mr. South explained problems experienced with

bags packing in around the bearings of the paddle. As a result the two ton paddle must be removed and all the bearings cleaned or replaced. Mr. South indicated that this translated to two days of down time. Mr. South noted that the bags tend to create a greater degree of contamination. This creates problems with the shredder causing additional downtime.

Mr. South noted that levels of plastics in residential organics is quite high. The level of contamination impacts the marketability of compost and greater amounts will certainly create difficulties in marketing the compost. Mr. South indicated that compost having a contamination level of higher than 3% by weight is not marketable.

Mr. South advised that not all bags that claim they are biodegradable break down during the process. He noted that consequently, Miller has reserved the right to do a pilot project before accepting any particular bag in the commercial stream. Mr. South referred to a company Miller has worked with since 1994, and indicated that this reputable firm does have bad batches of bags. Mr. South provided an example of one of the bags which had not broken down during the process. He went on to note that the formulation of bags does not consistently work well (i.e. Indigo works well sometimes, but not always).

Reviewing the impacts to HRM, Mr. South listed the following:

- Perhaps the most significant one is a decreased or inability to market the finished product due to contamination
- Increased processing costs due to operational costs (i.e. if they were to accept bags in large quantities, this would require an increase in the size of the pre-processing area to allow bags to be shredded and allow for additional sorters). Increased costs would also include increased maintenance costs and educational costs.

In summary, Mr. South indicated that the current configuration of the plant cannot handle bags in large quantities. Mr. South noted that Miller has tried to be flexible as it relates to the commercial sector, but in excess bags will create additional problems. He indicated that processing costs on the residential side would be increased substantially due to capital and labour costs. Mr. South stressed that not all bags break down.

In response to a comment from Councillor Rankin that Miller does tolerate bags in the commercial stream, Mr. South indicated that there was only one point of contact when dealing with the commercial side of the business (i.e. solid waste from MacDonald's). He indicated that it would be impossible to police this from a residential point of view.

Mr. Gerald Tibbo, New Era Farms, thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak to this matter. He went on to indicate that there were a number of issues with plastic bags. Mr. Tibbo noted that many of the issues outlined by Mr. South were similar to those at New Era. Mr. Tibbo indicated that health and liability was an significant issue relative to bags.

There is a safety issue with plastic bags and unless the facility is structured to receive and process them properly (i.e. open them properly) injuries are more likely to occur. Mr. Tibbo noted that he was not aware of an automated bag opener which is effective and even with the recent extension to his facility he did not believe the facility could accommodate an opener. Mr. Tibbo went on to describe an incident in which a near injury occurred. The inherent danger of any plastic bag is that you do not know what is in it regardless of whether it is transparent or not. In addition, a health concern exists should an employee be injured with a knife or other similar object (i.e. what contamination is carried by the object).

Mr. Tibbo went on to refer to the costs involved should metal contaminants pass through the processing system. He noted that a recent incident of a metal object going through the shredders at his facility had cost \$30,000 plus the down time. Mr. Tibbo indicated that New Era tried hard to ensure that plastic bags did not go through the system. He commented that his operation would prefer not to see plastic bags at all for a variety of issues including end product issues, moisture balances, contamination and the slowing of your line to open the bags. Mr. Tibbo stressed that handling bags is cost prohibitive. He advised that he could not support the introduction of bags to the residential stream.

The Committee agreed that the Miller and New Era presentation should be made to Council.

Mr. Smith suggested that after the Committee has dealt with the matter, perhaps it would be appropriate to take the matter to a Committee of the Whole.

The Chair indicated that he felt the presentation should have a Council viewing, thereby, allowing greater public access.

Responding to a question from the Chair regarding staff's position with regard to plastics in the residential stream, Mr. Smith indicated that it was the intent of staff to have the presentation, reflect upon the information gathered, and report back.

Mr. Schnare referred to his suggestion that HRM set a standard for bags so that it would not get the bags coming through the system which did not meet standard. He further suggested that the market (stores) would, if they were aware of the HRM standard, be cooperative in stocking standard bags and not others.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the varying aspects of introducing such a standard bag with note being made that marketing and increased costs must be considered. Mr. Bauld indicated that there were also administrative issues to be addressed.

Mr. Danny Christensen, Farnell Packaging, noted that there are two separate issues one being whether or not these bags should be introduced to the residential collection system

and the second being establishing a standard for a biodegradable bag. Mr. Christensen indicated that there were other bags of a similar standard that would process through the system.

Councillor Rankin suggested that perhaps these biodegradable bags could be used in conjunction with the landfill. Mr. Schnare indicated that the cost of the biodegradable bag is significantly higher than the present black plastic bag.

Mr. Smith noted that in certain areas of Canada paper bags are used for leaf and yard waste. He indicated that in time, HRM may be moving towards a similar policy.

Mr. Schnare, providing some closing comments, indicated that huge steps have been taken in the handling of solid waste in HRM. He went on to suggest that it was inevitable that bags would have to be dealt with in the system and that it was only reasonable that HRM establish a standard. Mr. Schnare suggested that rather than reject this out of hand, HRM should in conjunction with Miller run a test to determine just how these bags will work.

Councillor Sloane referred to the problem with residents not participating, particularly in the summer months, in the program. She noted that the lack of participation, in part, was due to problems with smell. Councillor Sloane suggested that HRM should begin to investigate the possibilities.

It was agreed by the Committee that a report regarding this issue be prepared and, after circulation to the Committee for comment, be forwarded to Council for consideration.

The Chair thanked Messrs. Schnare, South and Tibbo for attending and their presentations.

5. SOLID WASTE OPERATIONS REPORT

- A 'Mass Balance' for the period 01 April 2001 - 28 February 2002 (11 months) was before the Committee for consideration. A 'Tonnage YTD and Budget' was also before the Committee for consideration.

Ms. Laurie Lewis addressed the Committee providing a brief update on the curbside monitoring program (for the period October to February) including the following points:

- 11,000 carts through HRM monitored
- noted every occurrence of improper sorting
- zero tolerance for improper sorting
- 16% of households not sorting properly
- all households received a visit including an education piece

- education piece included information on what materials were improperly sorted and where those material properly go, and a Householders Guide to Waste Management
- followed up with a revisit to those same neighbourhoods to measure the change in sorting practices
- for example, in Fall River Village 47 of the 133 households monitored were revisited. 76% of those households re-visited improved sorting

Ms. Lewis then responded to questions from members of Council.

Continuing with her report, Ms. Lewis reviewed the Mass Balance document noting that there were no significant changes in trend. She briefly reviewed the YTD Tonnage and Budget document indicating there were no significant changes in tonnage over last month.

Councillor Rankin addressed the matter indicating that HRM was losing monies in commercial revenues. He indicated that this was because there was incentive for companies to dispose of their waste in other municipalities. Tipping fees are higher in HRM. Councillor Rankin indicated that this is detrimental to HRM's program as commercial tipping fees represent very significant revenues in the program.

Councillor Rankin indicated that many tons of solid waste are being shipped to Hants, and in all likelihood, Chester. Councillor Rankin suggested that the Province would not be eager to assist HRM in this regard. He noted that he felt it was incumbent upon HRM to seek the authority to permit the transportation of garbage.

Mr. Bauld suggested that he should bring this matter to the Regional Chairs Solid Waste Resource Advisory Committee meeting. He noted that it would be unlikely for the Province to change the Municipal Government Act unless there is uniformity of agreement. Mr. Bauld indicated that there would be Department of Environment representatives at that meeting. He further advised that these other municipalities are realizing revenues prior to having to have in place a second generation land fill in 2004.

Councillor Rankin suggested that the other municipalities would not support such a move.

Mr. Smith, noting that staff has not had an opportunity to really review this matter, commented that it had been HRM's original strategy to take care of all of its own garbage.

Councillor Rankin indicated that this matter has had national exposure at FCM.

MOVED by Councillor Hines staff prepare a report recommending that Council pursue with the Province authority for permitting of the transportation of garbage including supporting background material and the UNSM exposure. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

6. NEW BUSINESS

6.1 Review of Draft Time Line re C&D Waste Management Strategy

This matter was dealt with earlier in the meeting.

7. ADDED ITEMS

7.1 Motion of Peninsula Community Council - Reprieve Day re Accumulation of Household Waste

Mr. Smith indicated that staff had only recently received this request from Peninsula Community Council and had not had an opportunity to respond.

Councillor Sloane indicated that as the Committee was no doubt aware, the south end of Halifax was experiencing problems with an arson or group of arsons. She noted that many of the fires were being started in the green bins. Councillor Sloane indicated that the resolution coming forward from Peninsula Community Council responded to concerns about more fires being started using accumulated household waste. She indicated that this is a plea to have any accumulation of garbage cleaned up and appropriately collected by HRM.

A brief discussion ensued with it being agreed that Councillor Sloane would work with staff regarding a special clean up and identify the areas to which this would apply.

8. REVISED MEETING DATES

The following revised meeting dates were agreed by the Committee:

- Wednesday, May 16, 2002
- Thursday, June 20, 2002
- Thursday, September 19, 2002
- Thursday, October 31, 2002
- Thursday, December 12, 2002

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

The following information items were distributed:

- Correspondence dated February 14, 2002 from David Morse, Minister, Department of Environment & Labour to Councillor Rankin re Fast Food Litter

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March 28, 2002

- Correspondence dated March 7, 2002 from Jim Bauld, Diversion Planner to Mr. Jack Eisener re Clarification Amendment to By-law L-200

Sherryl Murphy
Assistant Municipal Clerk