



**Whatcom County**  
**Solid Waste Advisory Committee**  
**(SWAC) Meeting**  
JANUARY 26, 2023

**Members Present:**

Rodd Pemble  
Larry McCarter  
Carol Frazey  
Brandon Brobaker  
Brandi Hutton  
Mike McQuarrie  
Lisa Friend  
Ken Domorod

**Members Absent:**

Kevin Moore  
Kevin Renz

**Staff Present:**

Jennifer Hayden  
Jennifer Thompson  
Chelsea McGlothan  
Sue Sullivan

**Others Present:**

Pinky Vargas – Republic Services  
Michael Olinger – Public Works City of Bellingham  
Elodie Cerauskis – Sustainable Connections  
Ted Carlson – Sanitary Services  
Carolyn Bowie – Washington Department of Ecology  
Jaco ten Hove  
Jenna Deane – Sustainable Connections

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting of the Whatcom County SWAC was called to order by Rodd on Thursday, January 26, 2023 at 5:30p.m.

**2. Roll Call, Determination of Quorum, Approval of Minutes, Approval of Agenda, Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson**

- Roll call was taken first.



- Quorum was present
- There were no objections to the November minutes as presented. Carol moved to approve. Larry seconded the motion. The board voted and the minutes were approved.
- Larry moved to approve the agenda. Mike seconded the motion. The agenda is approved.
- Carol motioned to nominate Brandi for vice-chair. Larry seconded motion.
- Kevin motioned to nominate Rodd for chair. Carol seconded motion.
- Rodd as chair and Brandi as vice-chair – approved.

### **3. Public Comment Period**

No public comment

### **Meeting Topics:**

#### **4. Recycling Changes in the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County**

Brandon discussed the City of Bellingham and Sanitary Services Company's plan for single stream recycling and organics collection. Brandon stated the City feels that single stream is in line with a lot of legislative directives that are coming out right now. Such as the WRAP Act and 1799, the Organics Waste Management bill. It is also in alignment with the City's climate action plan by:

- Building a more efficient system and trucks
- Reducing carbon emissions by less trucks on the road
- Shrinking routes and trips that need to be taken

Going single stream will also help to minimize some of the wind-blown materials.

Ted with Sanitary Services Company stated they have been speaking with the City of Bellingham about an alternative form of collection for several years. Ted stated in the contract with the City of Bellingham it states that when the cost of residential recycling supersedes the cost of garbage, the company needs to look at their collection plan. Ted stated Sanitary Services Company discussed with the Bellingham City Council and they decided to do a short, 6-month, pilot project in one neighborhood to collect data. The pilot project consisted of:

- Changing collection to every other week
- Replacing three-bins with larger 90-gallon cart

Ted stated the three-bin system is very inefficient and labor and truck intensive. Having trucks with no compaction, they need to make more trips to empty them. Ted stated Council approved looking at a three-month study, which was started in May 2022. Some of the data they looked at was:

- How much more efficient was this system
- How much labor reduction was there
- Truck mile reduction
- How much material could fit on a truck and how big of an area they could cover
- Customer feedback
- Contamination rates

SSC saw 70%+ reduction in labor and omissions because of the reduction in truck miles and going from weekly to every other week. SSC received positive feedback from customers. A few concerns were:

- The size of the wheeled cart
- Contamination concern – if materials are being comingled, are they really being recycled?

Ted stated it was difficult to get data, and no meaningful data was collected on contamination due to everything being sorted by hand. Ted stated information was presented to City Council.

Ted stated Sanitary Services Company and the City of Bellingham have a difficult time finding and keeping drivers, especially experienced CDL drivers to drive recycling trucks. Ted stated it is against OSHA regulation to climb on a truck that is over 4 feet without being harnessed in, meaning workers cannot climb up on trucks to level loads to fit more material in the truck.

Ted stated trucks are being transitioned to alternative fuels per a requirement of their contract with the City. Sanitary Services Company will move to electric vehicles in the future, but it is a way away. The bigger companies need to work through bugs and inefficiencies first.

Sanitary Services Company is not able to go back and pick-up wind-blown material from the three-bins. Moving to a cart with a lid will help reduce the wind-blown materials. There was not a significant amount of change with tonnage collected in the City of Bellingham from the single stream pilot project. Ted stated he believes they would see an increase in participation from people who live in the county, but could lead to an increase in contamination.

Ted stated they pay \$191 a ton for the source separated material and \$120 a ton at the landfill. All bottles and cans are mixed together and being trucked down to a single stream Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in King County, Snohomish County, or Pierce County. Ted stated the City of Bellingham will be deciding to make organic food collection mandatory on an every-other week pick-up schedule. Ted stated it's also been considered to remove glass from curb side pick-up to try to eliminate contamination and provide glass drop-off locations around the city.

If the WRAP Act passes, it will change a lot of things for the haulers. The Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) component would require producers of packaging to pay for all of residential recycling, collection, the processing and purchasing of the commodities. This would be in the hopes that it would change the way producers think about how to package their items.

Ted stated they are committed to education programs, working with the customers and drivers to try to do everything they can to try to eliminate the challenges from contamination.

Brandon stated City Council asked them to come back with a resolution, which will be presented February 27<sup>th</sup>.

Carol asked if any of the glass stayed intact during the pilot program, and how much of it? Ted stated he doesn't have a percentage of breakage, but you will see some with the compaction and when the truck is dumped.

Ted stated another concern customers had was the card board. Would they be able to put it into the 90-gallon toter. He stated not everybody could but customers will stack it alongside the toter.

Ken asked what percentage of overall material that was taken in is glass? Ted stated he could get that information, but it has decreased. Ken asked if they kept glass separate and had a reduced number of trucks, could they pick up glass once a month? Ted stated they did not look at if they could do glass pick-up only once a month. He stated they did look at other counties and did quite a bit of analysis of having either a split container or running alternate weeks for recyclables – glass one week, cans/cardboards the other week. Brandon stated they're waiting to see what happens with the WRAP Act because it will produce an incentive for people to save and drop off bottles in a bottle drop area. Lisa asked how are bottles collected commercially? Michael stated they are collected and comingled the same way as at home.

Ted stated the State is also talking about having a uniform list of what is collected at the curb throughout the state or where recycling is offered. That makes it easier on the Materials Recovery Facilities (MRF's), helps from an education perspective when people are traveling to different jurisdictions. The City of Tacoma was successful with removing the glass from the curbside mix and going to centralized locations for drop off. Lisa asked for the contamination rate in Tacoma if it's possible to get that. Carol asked where there are drop-off locations. Ted stated it's common to have them at grocery stores. Rodd stated years ago in the City of Bellingham there were phone book drop-offs. He can image the glass drop-off locations would be similar. He also noted a big unattended container also invites garbage. Brandi asked if you can adjust the compaction rate of the trucks. Ted stated you can and they do and you want a lighter compaction rate with the recycling. Jennifer asked with a decrease in labor costs, decrease in fuels costs, and increase in capital how does that all pan out? Ted stated they still believe it's a more predictable cost and that they wouldn't see a cost increase and they would be able to control the cost a little better. If they can focus on controlling the variables that they can, they think will make a much more predictable rate.

Rodd provided an example – he had a customer call confused about an invoice for commercial cardboard drop box. The invoice showed \$111/ton because for decades cardboard was a credit. The company is trying to avoid the volatility in the pricing. Carol asked Rodd if that was monthly or yearly? Rodd stated monthly. November was \$111 per ton, December \$114 and January \$89. Lisa stated she's hoping the messaging will be less on economics and more on environmental savings to recycling. Brandon stated they want to achieve that balance in the City and he can't speak to County wide. Ted stated it's an important clarification that it's not the cost to the companies, it's the cost to the customers. That is what's driving the discussion. Lisa stated she doesn't pay

anything for recycling in Bellingham, that it is included in her garbage rate. Ted stated when the rates in the city went up 30% 3 years ago, that was almost entirely driven by the cost of recycling. Lisa commented that's not made clear to the customer. Ted stated that may be true and it was a decision that was made early on to have a base rate that included garbage and recycling.

Brandi asked if the materials collected for the pilot project were kept separate enough to be assessed separately and was the cost spent to recycle that assessed separately? Ted stated they were kept entirely separate and the processing fee was more by about \$50 a ton. They are currently paying a premium but need to work on getting those costs down.

Pinky stated there's not a region she's working on that fees and labor fees have gone up and she thinks it's important to education the customer so they know it will save them money by following this process.

Carol asked if there's a place people can look at the data from the pilot program. Ted stated he can send something out. Ken asked if they know the amount by weight of the contaminated recyclables went into landfill? Ted stated it's hard to get data from exact percentage of contamination but he can try to get some numbers. Rodd stated if we're at around 1-2% contamination with the three-bin system, we might see a 4-6% increase moving to toters. Lisa stated Boulder County, Colorado is at 12% with their education and single stream.

Jennifer asked what the proposed roll out timeline is if City County approves? Ted stated it's going to take a long time, a couple years for the city and could look different over each city in the county.

Comment/question in chat from Jaco: I'm all for increasing collection of food waste for composting but what does the "mandatory" aspect of that really look like? Ted stated it would be determined by how the city wanted to enforce it. Michael stated it would be imbedded into recycling and no enforcement in the early years and they would start with education. Rodd stated it is great that people can change the frequency of their service in Whatcom County. It has much greater environmental benefits than being able to change the size of the container.

Jennifer asked if the size of the toter is set in stone. Ted stated it is not and they could look at people having the option for a smaller can. The totters will have different color lids to allow drivers to determine which is which.

Brandi asked if mandatory composting will be effective at multi-family sites and what does that mean for recycling at multi-family sites? Ted stated for organics, the city contract covers up to a 4-plex, which would be included in the mandatory organics. Larger than a 4-plex is covered under their UTC Regulation and would not have mandatory organics. Recycling is imbedded for multi-family and UTC. The WRAP Act would require recycling statewide for multi-family sites. Brandi asked if there is a plan for education when the new single stream is rolled out? Michael stated the City's

education and outreach team has already started having discussions about how to confront the education barriers.

Comment in chat from Lisa: It's not just the students who've lived elsewhere: Lots of transplants to Whatcom County in recent years.

Question in chat from Carolyn: Would you be interested in sharing your data or publishing a longer report? The data you've collected would be valuable to help inform other communities who are considering new systems or changes to their collection. An article in Resource Recycling or presentation at a WSRA event come to mind as opportunities to share in the future. Ted stated he would be happy to share.

## **5. General Solid Waste Program Updates**

Jennifer provided general solid waste program updates:

- Public Health Educator position/Solid Waste Educator position, County Council will be voting for that on February 7, 2023 with hopes to hire in the Spring. Half funded by Foundational Public Health Services dollars to focus on environmental health related climate changes. Other half focused on outreach and education goals.
  - Ken asked how much money is being requested for that position? Jennifer stated about 66k or 67k from solid waste fund and State Department of Health.
  - Carol asked if this position will work with Public Works?
- Jennifer stated the Health Department will be working with Public Works on projects. She is currently working with them on a social marketing campaign aimed at hazardous waste and disposal within lake Whatcom and Birch Bay watersheds. This is starting with the Stormwater Division within Public Works by looking at how to improve the water quality of Lake Whatcom and Birch Bay and sending out educational materials.

Carol asked if there is any education provided for landscapers?

Jennifer answered these types of things will be relied on heavily by the new manager position to be thinking of these things we aren't currently doing.

Ken asked where the budget will come from for this new position to be able to do their job. Jennifer answered no exact numbers or assessment completed yet, but money will come from the Solid Waste fund.

Sue confirmed the executive committee approved this position. Jennifer stated executive committee did approve this position.

- Jennifer discussed the port and metal recycling. The space is being leased to ABC Recycling and their receiving metal that is being staged to be shipped overseas. A noise study was completed and it was underneath the levels established by ordinance. Study was done with normal operations and not loading of the ship which only happened once and was around the clock. There were lots of complaints about that. Another noise study is going to be completed to see if there's a way to deflect the noise and they are happy to

receive noise complaints. Jennifer stated she's unsure who's managing the project. Jennifer stated she can send out information for who to contact at the Port.

## **6. Open Session, Announcements**

- Rodd stated next meeting will mainly focus on organics
- Pinky asked for a Legislative update
- Ken asked a question regarding solid waste and the homeless – is it still the contract for funding for this trash removal program and is that still being developed? Brandon stated it's in the signature state with City and County Council and the money is FPHS money that is helping fund the encampment cleanups.
- Pinky stated a lot of the population have come from the county because the services are in Bellingham. It is a whole County challenge to support the homeless community and not just the City of Bellingham. Brandon stated the goal is to come up with some sort of scalable model that can be replicated throughout the County.
- Brandon stated he has three conditional offers out for FTE's. Rodd asked if he could summarize the job titles. Brandon stated Sanitation Technician I and II.
- Rodd commented Clare Fogelsong was directed to take over the Administration of the city's climate action plan implementation.
- Comments in chat from Carolyn: A couple of exciting conferences coming this Spring:
  - SWANA Northwest Regional Symposium, April 18-20, 2023, Tulalip Resort Hotel - <https://swananw.org/nw-symposium/>
  - WSRA Conference, May 21-24, 2023, Yakima Convention Center, Yakima, WA. Registration opens February 1<sup>st</sup> - <https://wsra.net/conference/>

## **7. Adjournment:**

Rodd Pemble adjourned the meeting at 6:53pm. All agreed.

## **CERTIFICATION**

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chelsea McGlothan, Coordinator  
Whatcom County Health Department

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Rodd Pemble, Chair  
Whatcom County Solid Waste Advisory  
Committee