

**GREEN COMMITTEE
AGENDA
MONDAY, JULY 22, 2019
2:15 P.M.**

PRESENT: Kathy A. Stegenga, Chairwoman
Leigh J. Benton, Barry J. Cheney, Kevindaryán Luján,
David Church

ALSO

PRESENT: Antoinette Reed, Legislative Counsel
Kate Schmidt, Planner, Planning Department
Ermin Siljkovic, Recycling Coordinator, Environmental Facilities and Services

Chairwoman Stegenga opened the committee meeting at 2:18 p.m. by asking everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present.

Ms. Stegenga stated they had a lengthy discussion regarding Styrofoam last month and she made several calls except for the schools because they are closed, so she will update the committee after Mr. Siljkovic speaks about Styrofoam and landfills. She asked if the Styrofoam is coming in as actual garbage, a recyclable, and if it is being separated.

Mr. Siljkovic replied that Styrofoam is a material that is used for many things, but as we all know, it is a terrible pollutant, clogs up waterways and takes many millennia to decompose. Regarding waste management facilities and recycling programs, it is a nuisance. It is basically inflated plastic that does not weigh much, the bulking aspect of it takes up a lot of space. Along with that issue, the majority of the public think that Styrofoam is something they can put in their curbside recycling bin which is not correct. Styrofoam is a No. 7 plastic which is not an economically viable material that can be recycled. The energy on the return investment is not very high when it comes to setting up the recycling for Styrofoam, so they have a volume issue when it comes to being able to landfill it and then there is a contamination issue which is very costly.

Ms. Stegenga pointed out that in the event the committee decided to put a ban on Styrofoam and switched over to one of the alternatives, one being paper which is still not biodegradable and the other being hard plastic, they would still have recycling issues.

Mr. Siljkovic responded that the hard plastic can be recycled as well as the paper depending on the paper packaging. He further explained different types of paper that can be composted, a food scraps composting facility and the process it would go through.

Mr. Cheney asked what the other counties operating food waste composting are.

Mr. Siljkovic replied Ulster County.

Mr. Cheney asked how many tons Ulster County does.

Mr. Siljkovic replied they hit permitted facility levels which is above 4,000 tons a year of food scraps. He stated they are moving the facility across the street from their current merf to a fifty plus acre site for additional space.

Mr. Cheney asked what is our county's current tonnage a year is.

Mr. Siljkovic replied this county is above 300,000 tons a year.

Mr. Cheney then clarified that even if this county did double in terms of food composting what Ulster County does because we are bigger, it will still only comprise 5% to 7% of the waste stream.

Mr. Siljkovic stated that we will not be able capture everything that will be generated. The facility will be designed for a specific audience.

Mr. Benton asked if the 4,000 tons for Ulster County are just food scraps or is it the total output of the facility.

Mr. Siljkovic replied that Ulster County has over 4,000 tons of only food scraps.

In regard to banning Styrofoam, Mr. Lujan stated that Ulster County and Dutchess County as well as Maine have banned it, and asked Mr. Siljkovic if there is any other county in the region that enforced the ban and if so, what differed.

Mr. Siljkovic replied they have different levels of aggression. Maine has a small industry that produces compost packaging and he thinks this county can do it as well.

Mr. Lujan commented it may be a good idea to bring new industries to the county because it would create jobs and future jobs.

Mr. Church clarified that Ulster County has flow control and we do not.

Mr. Siljkovic stated that is correct.

Discussion continued regarding flow control and carveouts.

Ms. Stegenga stated that she spoke with the president of Genpak, Kevin Kelly, who invited the committee to do a plant visit which would give them an idea of the different components. Mr. Kelly also referred her to the American Chemistry Council who will be sending her information on the different streams and different things that are available. The big consensus is that if they look to go with a non-foam plastic product, the cost is more than double. She has calls into the Sheriff's Office who is trying to compile the information as well as Valley View.

Mr. Benton clarified that Genpak recycles their Styrofoam.

Ms. Stegenga replied that Mr. Kelly told her there are companies in the United States that will come and pick up Styrofoam as long as it is kept separate. These companies melt it down and make picnic tables, hard plastic, etc.

Mr. Siljkovic asked if that includes the food soils.

Ms. Stegenga replied yes, because when they melt it down the bacteria is killed off. She stated that the one thing everyone she spoke to seemed to agree with was that the Styrofoam was the safest as far as food contamination and keeping it safe.

Mr. Benton commented that he would be in favor of going on a tour of Genpak and getting an explanation because he has always thought that material like this can be used to make many different items such as pathways, benches, speed bumps, etc.

Ms. Stegenga stated that the American Chemistry Council deals with this and said they would get her in contact with companies that would consider coming and picking it up to reuse it. She added that she is unsure of the cost but will find out.

Mr. Lujan clarified that Mr. Siljkovic's recommendation is that the county should move forward with banning the Styrofoam.

Mr. Siljkovic stated that they should move forward, but at the same time they should research solutions. He is in favor of bans as long as there is a good solution that is viable for everyone.

Mr. Lujan asked how the other counties are dealing with this.

Ms. Stegenga replied that New York City will be the one to watch because they just implemented the ban on July 1st.

Mr. Benton asked if all Styrofoam is No. 7.

Mr. Siljkovic replied he believes it is.

Ms. Stegenga stated that she will contact Genpak to set up a tour before the next committee meeting.

The second agenda item was an update on refrigerants.

Mr. Siljkovic, Mr. Church and the committee briefly discussed the Climate Smart Communities Grant on refrigerants and leak detection equipment for outdoor units.

Mr. Siljkovic came to the conclusion that any type of equipment would be costly, and the county does not have a need for it.

Ms. Stegenga stated that this can always be revisited next year if there is a need. She then asked Mr. Siljkovic if there is any other information that he would like to share with the committee.

Regarding the paper fee for the plastic bag fee, Mr. Siljkovic explained that New York City will impose the fee and twenty-seven of sixty-two New York State counties will not impose the fee.

Mrs. Reed pointed out that the five cents does not come to the county, we would only get two cents which will be used to purchase paper bags to give to low income areas.

Ms. Stegenga stated it will not off-set the budget and she believes that it comes down to people changing their behavior. If the punishment or the reward is not strong enough, it will not change the behavior.

Mr. Siljkovic agreed but believes it is something rather than nothing and if this is not done, things will get worse.

Mr. Cheney mentioned that he spoke with Mrs. Reed regarding the fee and there does not seem to be a lot of resources in terms of legislation that is available. He asked that Mrs. Reed explain what she has tried to inquire about.

Mrs. Reed stated that she called NYSAC to see whether or not there was any sample legislation since it is a statewide/countywide program and they said no, they did not yet draft anything, but they would be able to do so; however, they were waiting for guidelines from the Department of Taxation and Finance because it is imposing a fee (a tax) on local residents. When they do impose a fee the resolution or local law will have to be submitted to the Department of Taxation and Finance first because they would be the ones who would be receiving the funds. Furthermore, NYSAC stated that they would be willing to help draft a local law or resolution, but with the caveat that it would ultimately have to be reviewed and submitted to the Department of Taxation and Finance and they were still waiting from guidelines from them.

Ms. Stegenga asked if NYSAC would be doing this for the whole State and using that as the model.

Mrs. Reed replied yes, it would be a statewide initiative.

Mr. Lujan clarified that the committee will wait and then revisit this.

Mrs. Reed stated that is correct, she has not received any further direction from the Chairman.

The last agenda item was an update on the Smart Communities grant.

Mr. Church explained that the county applied for re-certification for the five-year review and if it is approved, the county will be in the 226-point range. He distributed a point sheet (see original minutes) and reviewed it with the committee as well as discuss different options and grants to earn more points.

The meeting adjourned at 3:18 p.m.