

NOTES OF WORKING GROUP MEETING, APRIL 11, 2003

The meeting was called to order at 8:35 a.m. by M. McGonagle, co-chair.

Members present: Robert V. Bibbo; Clayton Carlisle; Geoffrey DiCenso; Patrick Fingliss; Tom Getz; Terry Gray; Susanne Greschner; Leo Hellested; Dante Ionata; Sally Johnson; Janet Keller; Robert Lamoureux; Jamie M. Magnani; Mike McGonagle; Steven Mutter; John O'Brien; Timothy Reagan; Barry Schiller; Jeanne Tracey-McAreavey; John Trevor; Harold Ward;

Observers: Atiyah Curmally and Nick Bayard.

Mr. Ward presented and discussed, section-by-section, the Interim Report of the Economics Subcommittee, which is attached to these Notes.

There was an extended general discussion of the user-fee method of paying for residential solid waste collection and disposal known generically as the Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) method. There was recognition that PAYT programs must be implemented at the municipal level and it was widely conceded that the principal impediment to the adoption of PAYT programs by municipalities is the low municipal tipping fee of \$32/ton which is not high enough to serve as a financial incentive to a municipality to implement PAYT.

Mr. Ward noted that while there are no financial incentives in Rhode Island for the implementation of PAYT programs, about 100 of Massachusetts' cities and towns have adopted and are operating PAYT programs as a result of solid waste tipping fees there that are much higher than in Rhode Island.

A discussion of the recommendation in the Economics Subcommittee's Interim Report that the RIRRC should financially support municipalities seeking to implement PAYT programs was led by Mr. Ward and there was agreement that this would be an appropriate course of action for RIRRC.

This was followed by an extended discussion, led by Mr. Ward, of the Interim Report's consideration of the impact of the Municipal Solid Waste Tonnage Cap on the level of municipal recycling. There was agreement with the Interim Report's recommendation that Municipal Tonnage Caps should be reduced thereby removing an incentive to municipalities to generate waste up to the Municipal Cap for disposal at the low municipal tipping fee and, in turn, creating an incentive for municipalities to recycle more in order to keep their solid waste tonnages under the Municipal Cap.

There was an inconclusive discussion of the incentive to increased recycling that may be gained by allowing municipalities to sell unused Municipal Cap tonnages to other municipalities.

Mr. Schiller said it was essential for the Economic Subcommittee to develop in detail the costs of siting a new landfill, in addition to the costs of expanding Central Landfill, in order to be able to assess the economics of developing and maintaining 20 years of secure solid waste disposal capacity for the State of Rhode Island.

Mr. Ionata said that while it is possible substantial quantities of Rhode Island waste may be hauled out of state for disposal, it is essential for the state's economic advantage to always have available significant disposal capacity in-state to serve as a pricing competitive check and balance against the prices that may be charged by private firms who, in the future, may haul large volumes of Rhode Island waste out of state for disposal.

There was a lengthy general discussion of the need to improve the enforcement of commercial recycling regulations as a means of minimizing the disposal of recyclables in the commercial waste stream and increasing commercial recycling. Mr. Ionata described the virtual impossibility of enforcing existing commercial recycling regulations by levying fines and the difficulties encountered by the RIRRC 12 years ago when it sought to enforce the regulations and was unable to do so. Mr. Ionata said traditional methods of enforcement would be prohibitively expensive.

Mr. Mutter suggested that perhaps a commercial recycling enforcement staff position can be funded using revenue generated from commercial recycling at the MRF. Mr. Fingliss described the limited level of commercial recycling in overall MRF operations. Mr. McGonagle said that if the state can increase the overall municipal recycling rate to about 30%, there would be insufficient capacity at the MRF for any commercial recycling there. Mr. Gray said the enforcement of bans imposed against the disposal of specific materials at the Central Landfill would be much easier than enforcing regulations which prohibit the disposal of loads of waste containing a specified fraction of recyclables.

Mr. Schiller noted that some municipalities do so much better than others in recycling and whether it would be possible to raise the level of recycling attainment of the low-performing communities.

Mr. DiCenso said more attention must be paid to state agency recycling which in some cases is nearly non-existent.