

NOTES OF WORKING GROUP MEETING 9, OCTOBER 1, 2003

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Mike McGonagle, co-chair.

Members present: Clayton Carlisle; Carole Bell; Geoff DiCenso; Tom Getz; Susanne Greschner; Patrick Fingliss; Leo Hellested; Dante Ionata; Bob Lamoureux; Jamie Magnani; Eugenia Marx; Mike McGonagle; Steve Mutter; John O'Brien; Timothy Reagan; Barry Schiller; Shim Silverstein; Jean Tracey-McAreavey; John Trevor; Harold Ward.

Observers; James N. Allam; Nick Bayard; Atiyah Curmally;

Mr. Bayard noted that there was an extensive, in-depth discussion of PAYT during the September 3rd meeting and he requested that the PAYT discussion be reported in greater detail in the Notes of the September 3rd meeting. Mr. Ionata agreed.

Mr. Ionata led an extended discussion of the redrafted section of the Comprehensive Plan concerning leaf and yard waste composting concluding with the finding that 55,000 to 65,000 tons of leaf and yard debris can be diverted from landfill disposal and the recommendation that the disposal of leaf and yard debris in the Central Landfill should be formally prohibited by statute or DEM regulation.

Mr. Allam noted that the City of Woonsocket does not collect leaf and yard debris curbside as indicated on one of the reports distributed during the October 1 meeting. This information was provided by the City of Woonsocket. Mr. Ionata said the correction would be made.

Ms. Bell suggested that a table containing data concerning composting by municipalities be included in the Comprehensive Plan.

As part of a lengthy discussion concerning the potential for cooperation of municipalities concerning the implementation of a ban against the landfilling of leaf and yard debris, Mr. Schiller suggested that strong language be added to the Comprehensive Plan that municipalities should comply with state regulations and statutes requiring that leaf and yard debris be recycled and to cooperate with RIRRC and DEM to help attain full compliance with these regulations and statutes in order to achieve maximum diversion of leaf and yard debris from landfilling. Mr. Mutter said language prohibiting leaf and yard debris from disposal at Central Landfill should be included in the municipal recycling and disposal contracts. There was an extended discussion involving Ms. Bell, Mr. Schiller and Mr. Silverstein and Mr. McGonagle concerning steps to be taken and mechanisms to be used to attain successful compliance with a ban of leaf and yard debris from landfill disposal. Mr. McGonagle observed that successful enforcement of a ban against leaf and yard debris landfill could not be accomplished without levying penalties against violators.

A long discussion ensued concerning how to obtain compliance, not only with state laws and regulations, but also with the provisions of the new Rhode Island Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan. Mr. Carlisle suggested that consideration be given to incorporating some regulations as an integral part of the new Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Ward declared that accountability concerning compliance with the provisions of the Comprehensive Plan must be established and implemented.

Mr. Allam said that imposing fines as a means of enforcing a ban against the landfilling of leaf and yard debris would not be successful. Mr. Allam also observed that diverting 50,000 tons of leaf and yard waste annually from the Central Landfill would result in a loss to the RIRRC of about one million dollars in revenue annually, which, in turn, would reduce the amount of funding available to support recycling programs.

There was a lengthy discussion of food waste composting with a recognition that organic waste comprises up to 25% of the municipal waste stream and that large-scale food waste composting has not yet been launched in Rhode Island. Mr. Ionata described the difficulties encountered by the RIRRC in the past in attempting to launch several pilot food waste composting projects. Mr. Ionata recommended that a comprehensive study of the economic feasibility of large-scale food waste composting be included as a recommendation in the new Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Trevor said a successful food waste composting pilot project has been conducted recently in Massachusetts. Ms. Bell suggested that it might be possible to initiate a successful food composting

project involving the ACI. Mr. McGonagle said there were major food composting projects at the University of Maine and Mr. Mutter reported concerning a food waste composting project at the University of Colorado.

Mr. Schiller suggested that the feasibility consider the efficacy of existing and/or new legislative mandates. Ms. Bell said URI should be considered for involvement with participation in a large-scale food waste composting project. Ms. Bell and Mr. DiCenso described the food waste-composting project of the City of San Francisco, which, Mr. DiCenso said, collects food waste curbside for the purposes of composting it. Ms. Bell asked whether RIRRC would be interested in developing a food composting facility at its Johnston site. Mr. Silverstein said the cost of collecting food waste could well make food waste composting uneconomic. Mr. Trevor suggested that elimination of the tip fee for municipal leaf and yard debris could impact commercial generators of leaf and yard debris.

Ms. Bell recommended that the new Comprehensive Plan include a completion date for the proposed food waste composting economic feasibility study. A discussion of accountability and responsiveness followed. Mr. Ward recommended that more background concerning food waste composting be included in the new Plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m.