

WESTCHESTER COUNTY BOARD OF LEGISLATORS

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY

MINUTES: April 26, 2010

MEMBERS: Chair: Harckham; Legislators: Abinanti, Kaplowitz, Myers, Rogowsky, Testa.

IN ATTENDANCE: STAFF: C. Crane, P. Pepe; GUESTS: Hon. R. Lyman (Pound Ridge); Comm'r. T. Lauro, L. Vetrone, M. Parise (WCDEF); J. Liszewski (RDD#1 Adv. Bd., Yonkers); J. Krupa (Malcolm Pirnie); A. Jaffe Holmes (GNC); Z. Wojnar (PECC); E. Campbell; S. Eskow [list of other attendees on file]

Committee on Environment called to order at 3:05 pm.

Item(s) Discussed: Westchester County Solid Waste Management Plan

Chair Harckham opened the meeting, noting the committee has combined with the Energy Committee with Leg. Rogowsky serving as vice-chair. As well, Ms. Wendy Wild will be coordinator for the committee. He then initiated a discussion of the county solid waste management plan (county SWMP) and invited input from Administration representatives.

Commissioner Lauro provided an overview of the county's plans to revise the county's solid waste management plan. Mr. Vetrone described the recently-released NYS draft SWMP. In reply to Chair Harckham's question on public input, he noted that WCDEF would reach out to municipal representatives for input/comment on the NYS SWMP. The only nearby public meeting is scheduled for New York City, and comments are due by July 6. He stated that WCDEF intends to submit comments regarding the proposed reporting of recyclables on a per capita basis and the classification of certain materials (e.g., C&D debris, sewage sludge biosolids). Mr. Krupa described the outline of the county SWMP, as shown on the annotated table of contents (hand-out).

In response to Leg. Myers question, Mr. Vetrone explained that the retrofit of the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) to receive additional plastic materials is underway. The equipment has been purchased, and expected start date is January 2011. Chair Harckham stated that legislation requiring source separation for the additional plastics should be introduced to coincide with the MRF retrofit to receive plastics in Jan. 2011.

Commissioner Lauro responded that it was preferable to proceed in a step-wise manner, with initial notice to municipalities to provide food-grade plastic items in order to assess the operation of the equipment (performance testing). Upon discussion, it was agreed that legislation could be drafted to stagger the effective dates to account for both the initial roll-out of the MRF retrofit and a new requirement to submit plastic items.

Chair Harckham inquired about electronic waste (“e-waste”) recycling in the new plan. Mr. Vetrone stated that proper electronic waste recycling costs more, and WCDEF had eliminated one of its vendors for not using appropriate practices. Commissioner Lauro noted that pending state legislation would require manufacturers to take back certain items. Chair Harckham asked about landfill gas recovery at the Croton Point landfill, and Commissioner Lauro stated that gas recovery would not be cost effective because much gas had escaped while the landfill was uncapped for many years. Leg. Abinanti inquired whether new wells could be advanced to recover methane. Commissioner Lauro replied that existing well spacing at the landfill is good.

Leg. Kaplowitz stated that promoting biodegradable, corn-based utensils would be a helpful public education tool on progressive materials management, even though much of the county’s waste is not disposed of in landfills. County institutions like the community college, penitentiary, or medical center might be good candidates to pilot-test the use of these utensils. Chair Harckham asked how the county SWMP would link to the county’s climate change efforts, and Commissioner Lauro stated that vehicle trip reductions or reduced mileage is one means to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Chair Harckham stated that more formal integration of Global Warming Task Force (GWTF) recommendations should occur, as waste reduction and recycling was a major aspect of the GWTF report.

Chair Harckham concluded discussion by summarizing items going forward: i) amendment of the county’s source separation law for additional plastic items, ii) follow-up meeting between WCDEF and Pound Ridge, iii) receipt of the 2009 recycling report, and iv) the Committee’s readiness to assist with SWMP public input.

Upon the motion of Leg. Testa, seconded by Leg. Rogowsky, the Committee voted to adjourn (all in favor). The meeting ended at approximately 4:00 p.m.

[audio recording of the meeting is on file]