



MINUTES
SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMISSION
Monday, September 24, 2001

Solid Waste Management Division **Solid Waste Management Center, 1201 Second Street**

Chairperson Rod Becker called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

1. Roll call: Commissioners Present: Rachel Balsley, Rod Becker, Kristine Johnson, Judith Maguire, Garth Schultz, Carrie Sprague.
Commissioner Absent: Dick Lerner
Staff: Becky Dowdakin.
Members of the Public: Jeff Belchamber, Robert Clear, Sara MacKusick.
2. Announcements: None.
3. Comments from the Public: None.
4. Approval of the August 27, 2001 minutes: Sprague noted that in the second paragraph of the quarterly report from the Ecology Center, "to" should be changed to "two." Sprague further noted that Theodore Johnson, a member of the public, attended the meeting. It was M/S/C Sprague/Schultz to approve the minutes as amended. The vote was 6/0/1 with Johnson abstaining.
5. Old Business

a. Quarterly Reports from Community Conservation Centers (CCC)

Sara MacKusick, CCC Executive Director, summarized the (written) quarterly report provided to the Commission in August 2001. Annual tonnage handled by CCC has increased 30.6% compared to FY1999-2000. That figure includes materials purchased from UC Berkeley amounting to approximately 100 tons per month. Ecology Center curbside tonnages are down about 8% compared to last year, while City of Berkeley's commercial tonnages are up about 10%. Prices for baled paper grades continued their slow decline, with newspaper currently selling for \$54 per ton, cardboard at \$58 per ton, and mixed paper at \$38 per ton. Tonnage of HDPE has grown by 80%, and overall, PET and HDPE tonnages have increased 70% over the previous fiscal year.

CCC entered into a labor agreement with the Industrial Workers of the World in May 2001. The labor agreement established three salary levels. The first level includes sorters, the second level includes forklift and loader operators, and the third level includes the baler operator and roll off driver. CCC has had problems retaining higher-level employees due to low wages historically. The new salary increases have raised CCC's processing costs markedly.

The addition of plastics to the curbside program has also increased sorting costs by about \$100,000 per year, though CCC recovered much of that amount in new revenues for plastics. The processing costs for fibers have not increased much because the fiber sorting system is

working well. The container sorting line, however, is costing more with the addition of plastics.

CCC has entered into a three party agreement (with Ecology Center and the City) to bring in a consultant to perform a fee survey and an operations audit. CCC will report the results of this work to the Commission.

Balsley asked why the consultant was being hired. Dowdakin responded the fee survey is a provision of the City's contract with CCC and should provide a fair market comparison for CCC's sorting fees. Sprague asked what was being sorted. MacKusick answered that all containers are dumped together.

Becker inquired about the term of the agreement and MacKusick replied that it expired in June 2003. Becker asked if the new labor agreement included COLA increases. MacKusick answered that COLA increases were not included because all the employees would be getting annual merit or seniority increases.

b. Budget Update

Dowdakin reported that she did not have new information prepared for the meeting. The item was deferred to the October 22, 2001 meeting.

c. Year 2000 Diversion Rate

Dowdakin reported that the City of Berkeley report 49% diversion for calendar year 2000 to the California Integrated Waste Management Board. The City fell approximately 1200 tons short of the 50% goal. Dowdakin reviewed how the diversion rate is calculated and what the City is required to report to the State. Staff is now looking into the transfer station records to make sure that the City has been properly documenting the source jurisdiction of incoming tonnage. Many jurisdictions that host disposal facilities feel they are unfairly burdened with tonnage that is misreported by facility users, who might think they will get a discount if they name the host city rather than their own city. The State periodically checks whether disposal facility employees ask the "source" question reliably at their gates.

Johnson suggested that the City hang a sign at the Transfer Station notifying customers of the purpose of the questions, so that customers will be more inclined to answer truthfully. Dowdakin clarified that the problem staff is addressing currently is simply one of correcting bad data entry that might well result in the City achieving the 50% goal.

Sprague asked how this related to CCC's recycling performance. Balsley and Johnson explained that the diversion calculation was related to a measurement of disposal tonnages and not a measurement of recycling activity.

6. New Business

a. Proposed Resolution on the Purchase and Recycling of Batteries

Robert Clear summarized the intent of the draft resolution on the purchase and recycling of batteries, on which the City Environmental Advisory Commission (CEAC) had asked the Solid Waste Management Commission to comment. Because Clear stated that he was not a

member of CEAC, Becker said that the Commission would not consider Clear's remarks to represent the position of CEAC.

Clear reported that the City of San Francisco had worked on this resolution. According to the EPA, mercury is a problem in landfills and the predominant source is batteries. Ni-Cd batteries are the biggest source of cadmium in the landfills, and cadmium moves into water easily. Most alkaline batteries no longer contain mercury. Clear believes that the City needs to have a collection program with reporting from the SWM Division.

Balsley stated that batteries are not a high percentage of solid waste, and pointed out that San Francisco is a city and a county and therefore could have authority that the City of Berkeley might not have. She stated further that the tracking system described in the resolution was not a good one. Clear responded that one intent of the resolution is to formalize with the City a vendor take-back program. He acknowledged that rechargeable batteries are not identical to regular batteries and therefore are not always interchangeable.

Sprague pointed out that the Alameda County HHW program takes batteries. Clear reported that Berkeley Hardware takes anything less than two pounds and at LBL there are battery receptacles throughout. Maguire suggested that people save batteries but do not recycle them if it is not convenient. Dowdakin mentioned that landfill disposal of Ni-Cd batteries is already unlawful. She described the City's in-house program that is already in place, including that the Solid Waste Management Center is required to collect batteries as "universal" waste. She stated that the language in the resolution needed to be flexible so that staff could pursue programs that are likely to work.

Balsley asked what the CEAC wanted from the SWMC. Clear responded that CEAC was requesting support and comments.

Becker suggested that what the City does now is a good example for other businesses and the public. He mentioned that in Geneva, Switzerland, battery collection receptacles were commonplace and staff should check into that system. Johnson was very concerned about the costs. Clear replied that he had no feeling for the cost of the purchasing preferences proposed in the resolution. Balsley said she thought that an environmentally preferable purchasing policy was a good direction to take. Becker suggested that the approach be collaborative rather than by resolution, building on the conscientiousness of City employees.

Becker stated that the Commission would like to review the resolution again after CEAC has revised it.

b. Discussion of Curbside Poaching

Becker opened the discussion on poaching by indicating that it would be limited to no more than 45 minutes. He requested staff to find out what happened with the recent San Francisco anti-poaching campaign as covered on KRON television news. Schultz moved that the discussion be tabled until new information was available for discussion. Johnson seconded the motion. Becker summarized the history of addressing poaching in Berkeley, including the involvement police reserves and working committees representing broad interests. The

motion carried 5-0-1 with Becker abstaining. Dowdakin asked the Commission for direction on this issue. Maguire and Becker suggested looking into the availability of a Police Department representative for a future meeting and the status of the Police Reserve program.

7. Staff updates Dowdakin reported that the **Reuse Directory** is at the printer and should be available soon. The **UC Berkeley student move-in/move-out** proceeded without notable incident. Campus personnel had requested the City to place 12 roll-off bins in the campus area. The Solid Waste Management Division placed eight bins for the collection of discards from the summer residents. Urban Ore picked over these bins for salvageables as they arrived at the Transfer Station. The **Transfer Station floor repair** project is due to begin in mid-October. The Transfer Station will be closed for two weeks, during which time patrons will be directed to the West Contra Costa Sanitary Landfill or to the Davis Street Transfer Station. A **Tour of Grover Landscape** has not yet been scheduled.

The site occupied by the CCC-operated **recycling center at Dwight Way and Martin Luther King Jr. Way** is for sale. The owners offered to sell to CCC, but CCC could not afford the asking price of approximately \$500,000. The recycling center collects about 80 tons per month of materials from Berkeley residents. If the site were closed, most of these materials might be recycled through the curbside program or the other drop off site. However, the Dwight and King site provides an important and convenient service to local apartment dwellers who are typically underserved by the curbside and commercial programs. Becker suggested that the City should look into the availability of surplus City property for relocating the recycling center. This item was agendaized for the next meeting.

8. Future agenda items and meeting days

The next meeting is scheduled for October 22, 2001. Items for next agenda include report from staff on status of the refuse fund, update on recycling outreach to other public agencies, discussion of D/K site, update on poaching if new information is available, review of revised battery resolution if available, update on banner re state survey.

9. Adjourn: the meeting was adjourned at 8:53 p.m.