

**WHATCOM COUNTY SOLID WASTE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**  
**AUGUST 27, 2020 MEETING MINUTES**

**Committee Members Present**

Satpal Singh Sidhu, County Executive, Whatcom County  
Scott Korthuis, Mayor, City of Lynden  
John Perry, Mayor, City of Everson  
Greg Hansen, Mayor, City of Ferndale  
Bonnie Onyon, Mayor, City of Blaine  
Eric Johnston, Public Works Director, City of Bellingham

**Committee Members Absent**

Seth Fleetwood, Mayor, City of Bellingham  
James Ackerman, Mayor, City of Nooksack  
Kyle Christensen, Mayor, City of Sumas

**Staff Present**

Jeff Hegedus, Environmental Health Supervisor, Whatcom County Health Department  
Janice Deptuch, Clerk III, Whatcom County Health Department  
John Wolpers, Environmental Health Manager, Whatcom County Health Department  
Kathleen Roy, Assistant Director, Whatcom County Health Department

**Call to Order**

The meeting of the Solid Waste Executive Committee was called to order by Satpal Singh Sidhu on Thursday, August 27, 2020 at 2:00 p.m. on a Go to Meeting Call.

**Introductions, Determination of Quorum, and Approval of 2019 Meeting Minutes**

County Executive introduced each person. Janice determined that we had a quorum. The 2019 meeting minutes were approved 1<sup>st</sup> by John Perry and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Greg Hansen, all were in favor.

**Solid Waste Operations Update**

Jeff Hegedus gave an update on Solid Waste programs.

The Health Department Solid Waste Program conducts solid waste planning activities, regulates over 35 permitted and exempt county solid waste handling facilities, implements the county Disposal of Toxics and Secure Medicine Return programs, monitors and maintains closed county landfills, investigates illegal dumping complaints, manages waste reduction and recycling community outreach and education programs, provides pollution prevention technical assistance, responds to public waste management inquiries, manages the litter cleanup and Adopt-A-Road programs, provides solid waste collection and July 4 cleanup in Birch Bay, and supports the Solid Waste Advisory Committee.

In 2020, with all program staff being fully reassigned to COVID-19 outbreak response duties, solid waste program activities currently continue on a limited and prioritized basis.

Cedarville Landfill and Y Road I and II Landfills monitoring and maintenance activities continue routinely, as per the approved closure plans and water quality permitting, with no new contamination or capital requirement issues.

In 2019 the Disposal of Toxics program, which includes the operation of three satellite collection stations and one annual off-site collection event in Point Roberts is running smoothly.

In 2019 the Adopt-A-Road program resulted in the cleanup of 31,919 pounds of solid waste from 192 miles of roadway, 10 acres of land, and 65 dump sites using 1,688 volunteer hours. Birch Bay solid waste collection and Birch Bay July 4<sup>th</sup> cleanup efforts continue as per routine. Following the 2020 flood event, 18 tons of flood debris and 640 waste tires were cleaned up in the Marietta area.

Staff responded to and investigated hundreds of solid waste complaints in 2019, although in 2020 the capacity to respond to complaints has been significantly reduced while resources have been reallocated to COVID-19 response.

In 2019, following the first full year of program implementation, a total of 4,542 pounds of unwanted medicines were collected and properly disposed. Whatcom County Health Department was 10<sup>th</sup> nationally to start this program.

A food recovery program by Sustainable Connections was put in place, the 1<sup>st</sup> year 75,000 not going into landfills.

China Sword ban SWAC had update. Turn our sites on this issue. They have to separate the items in the garbage.

Satpal asked Jeff to share the issues with garbage in the Eastern part of the county.

Jeff said the Health Department has started a voucher program due to hardship for free disposal. Jeff gave an example. WCHD has \$11,000 to spend till the end of this year.

Jeff is working with Kendall to merge voucher program with the Adopt-A-Rode program.

A mid-year WUTC compliance review of new solid waste program implementation in Point Roberts was conducted by in 2019, which concluded that rates and service provision requirements were on target and meeting goals. The program continues to run well, a second WUTC review is in progress, and the transfer station mobile office has been purchased and is currently being shipped. Of special note is the participation of Cando Recycling and Disposal in a national plastic film recycling pilot program, through SC Johnson, which resulted in 1,320 pounds of plastic film being collected curbside and recycled in the first half of 2020.

Waste reduction and recycling community education and outreach programs continue on track for the youth (ReSources Sustainable Schools program), adult (WSU Master Composter/ Master Recycler program) and commercial (Sustainable Connections Toward Zero Waste program) target populations.

## **2021 Whatcom County Comprehensive Solid Waste and Hazardous Waste Management Plan**

As required every five years by RCW 70.95, the existing 2016 Whatcom County Comprehensive Solid and Hazardous Waste Management Plan must be updated. The plan describes the current solid and hazardous waste management system, and makes recommendations for the next five years of implementation.

Following completion of the draft update, the plan will 1) be reviewed by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC), and 2) enter into a SEPA public

comment period. SWAC will conduct a final review, and the plan will be submitted for SWEC review, comment and approval. Following this, the plan will be submitted to County Council, as the governing body of the disposal district, and Ecology for final approval.

**Results of 2019 Amendment to WCC 8.13, Solid Waste Disposal District, regarding the Solid Waste Excise Tax**

Historically, to fund solid waste programs, WCC 8.13.030, Excise privilege tax levied required that solid waste collection companies (SSC, Nooksack Valley Disposal, and Cando Recycling and Disposal) collect and remit to the County a solid waste excise tax of \$8.50 per ton solid waste collected. However, since cans cannot be weighed curbside, a conversion from per ton to percent of invoice basis was used by each hauler to invoice customers to collect the tax.

Based on customer base and rate structure, each hauler used a different tax percentage. SSC added a local tax of 3.7% in the unincorporated areas, and 5.0% in Bellingham; Nooksack Valley Disposal used 4.45%; Cando Recycling and Disposal used 2.91%. WUTC approved tariffs included these conversions as a tariff requirement. Quarterly, each hauler submitted to the County a report that documents tons of solid wastes collected, and remitted \$8.50 per ton. However, it was unknown if the current use of historic percentages provided an amount collected exactly equal to the amount remitted. As recommended by SWAC, with input from WUTC, staff proposed that WCC 8.13.030, Excise privilege tax levied be amended to implement a uniform tax, for all regulated solid waste collection companies, for both commercial and residential customers, based on percent of invoice rather than a per ton basis, the same as implemented by the current 3.6% state solid waste tax. The excise privilege tax at county transfer stations and drop box facilities, where solid waste can be weighed at the scale, would remain unchanged at the current \$8.50 per ton. People can get an exemption.

Using Department of Revenue combined excise tax returns, provided by each hauler on a strictly confidential basis as per RCW 82.32.330, the total annual 2017 and 2018 invoiced taxable amount (combined hauler commercial and residential revenue) was calculated, and divided into the total annual 2017 and 2018 revenue received by the County from the solid waste excise tax (from the \$8.50 per ton excise tax). Based on this calculation, for both 2017 and 2018, a solid waste excise tax of 3.3% of invoice, for all haulers, for both commercial and residential customers, was estimated to result in a revenue neutral conversion, where taxes collected would exactly equal taxes remitted. WCC 8.13.030, Excise privilege tax levied was subsequently amended in 2019, with a January 1, 2020 implementation date.

Q1 2020 revenue from collection companies, not including transfer stations or drop box facilities (which remain at the \$8.50 per ton rate) was \$247,278 which compared to the 2018-2019 Q1 average of \$216,900. The current assessment is that, accounting for growth related increases in tonnage and the need for a full year of data, the estimate of 3.3% is accurate and meets the goals. The committee had lots of discussion on this item.

**Proposed 2021-2022 Solid Waste Budget Programs Budget**

The current financial status 2021-2022 two year solid waste programs budget was presented by Kathleen Roy, Assistant Director for discussion and input and consideration of new program requests.

The committee had lots of discussion on the revenues. The committee asked for the last three years of the budget to compare.

A motion to approve the budget was made by Scott Korthuis and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Satpal Singh Sidhu, all were in favor.

**Open Session, Adjournment**

No public in attendance.

Adjourned at 3:00 pm. by Satpal Singh Sidhu, County Executive.

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Satpal Singh Sidhu, County Executive

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Janice Deptuch, Clerk III

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Date

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Date

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