



MINUTES

BEDFORD COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

BEDFORD COUNTY ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

APRIL 15, 2019

5:00 P.M. BUDGET WORK SESSION

- a. Discussion regarding the Solid Waste Budget and Disposal Plan.

Adjourn the Work Session

5:00 P.M. WORK SESSION

Board of Supervisors: Tommy Scott, Chairman, District 5; Andy Dooley, Vice-Chairman, District 6; Bill Thomasson, District 1; Edgar Tuck, District 2; Charla Bansley, District 3; John Sharp, District 4; and Kevin Willis, District 7

Staff: County Administrator Robert Hiss, County Attorney Patrick Skelley, Public Works Director Sheldon Cash, Solid Waste Manager Mike Dorsey, Finance Director Susan Crawford, and Executive Assistant Brigitte Lockett

Chairman Scott called the work session to order and turned the meeting over to County Administrator Robert Hiss, Public Works Director Sheldon Cash, Solid Waste Manager Mike Dorsey, and Draper Aden Representative Lynn Klappich.

Mr. Hiss explained that Mr. Cash and Mr. Dorsey recently informed him that there were serious capacity challenges at the landfill. He said there would be a budget discussion following the presentation on Solid Waste.

Mr. Cash introduced Lynn Klappich, Engineer and Representative from Draper Aden Associates, who has been assisting us with the capacity issues at our landfill. He noted that Ms. Klappich helped site the landfill back in the 1980s. He then turned the meeting over to Mr. Dorsey for a presentation on the Solid Waste Disposal Plan.

Mr. Dorsey began his presentation (which will be kept on-file in the Administration office for public review) by explaining that he was asked to look at the landfill expansion and capacity back in November by Mr. Cash. He said the landfill expansion issues include permitting, capacity, and the construction schedule. He said he will also discuss alternative disposal planning during his presentation.

Mr. Dorsey stated that the Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) timetable for permitting is approximately two years, due to issues they are dealing with regarding the opposed mega-landfill in Cumberland County. He feels this will be resolved once DEQ determines whether they will allow additional capacity in Virginia, but the delay will be significant. Ms. Klappich clarified the code was originally established to try to control the private landfills; this is the first time in twenty-five years it's being applied to public landfills. She said there are multiple public landfills in Virginia that need more capacity, so DEQ is reviewing their code. Mr. Dorsey noted that DEQ was backlogged before the Cumberland landfill was even an issue.

In response to a question from Supervisor Sharp, Mr. Cash stated that Cell C was opened on June 24, 2011; that cell was projected to last eight to ten years, based upon the engineer's estimate. In 2014, a new engineering firm was hired to evaluate (among other things) capacity, as well as permitting for the next cell; they were also tasked with providing annual volume estimates to our facility. Their annual volume reports went beyond the original 2019-20 range, and even as of last summer their estimate was 6.2 to 8.8 years left in Cell C as of 2018. During the past few years, we have also been working on permitting the next cell, as well as the wetland delineation process. However, from last summer to where we are today the available capacity numbers have changed significantly.

Supervisor Sharp asked if the engineering firm that was involved in the volume error would liable for costs associated with this issue. Mr. Cash said he was not sure and would have to check with our legal counsel.

Mr. Dorsey noted we are entering Cell C-2 now, and it is what will be available for the next two years. He noted that much of the challenges they face has to do with the remaining capacity in Cells A and B; they are on a slope, which makes it extremely difficult to locate trash there long-term. Other issues include a high rock/soil to waste ratio, linear/restricted operational areas, possibly unstable shear strength, leachate management, poor waste density, inefficient/expensive operations, and uncertain landfill life because of operational factors. Mr. Dorsey said roughly 140,000 to 150,000 cubic yards were counted into the capacity (equaling almost two years), but operationally these areas are really not available. He noted we have been struggling with excess leachate since November; all landfills in Virginia are saturated and are breaking out on the side slopes; these leaks must be patched daily per federal regulations, and it's not unusual to have as many as five in one night.

In response to a question from Supervisor Thomasson, Mr. Dorsey said the Region 2000 landfill is better able to deal with these issues because they have more operators and more equipment. We don't own our own excavator, so every time we need one it's a contracted repair. With a leachate leak, an excavator

has to dig down six to twelve feet until the flow drains vertically into the landfill; it's then covered with stone and tight soil. These leaks must be repaired as soon as they are discovered, and since we have so many it can get expensive. Mr. Cash added that soil quality is also an issue, as we have silty micaceous soil that doesn't hold well on or keep things contained well on side slopes.

Mr. Dorsey continued with his slide presentation, which detailed how the remaining capacity was estimated; he reiterated that we will run out of capacity in summer of 2021. He said if permitting is approved for new construction, it's a three-year process before we even get to construction; a conservative estimate would be a minimum of five years to completion. Ms. Klappich concurred with Mr. Dorsey's estimate, noting that the excessive rainfall is making construction more difficult and it's getting harder to find available contractors as the economy picks up.

Mr. Dorsey then moved on to options moving forward, which included improvements to the transfer building such as retrofits to make room for transfer trailers, adding a push wall for trailers, leachate management, storage, and enclosing the far side of the building. Road and parking improvements, grading and stormwater improvements, and a tarping platform are also needed. The building is already in place, so these are all just improvements to the existing site. Ms. Klappich noted this will enable us to move more tonnage (loose trash) with the haul trailers.

In response to a question from Mr. Cash, Ms. Klappich stated that a minor modification would be needed to the permit-by-rule in our manuals. Mr. Cash noted that permitting an existing transfer station is a much faster process than permitting a landfill. In response to a question from Supervisor Sharp, Ms. Klappich stated that expedited permits are done for very minor issues and changes; it would not be done for the construction needed for our landfill. She noted we have already been told this will be a two-year turn-around permitting process.

Mr. Dorsey then explained we have basic options moving forward that require more discussion. The first is onsite disposal; reducing the tonnage will make the landfill last longer, but we would need to decide when to close. The second option is to transfer disposal, but the issue with this option is long-term stability and cost. Lastly, recycling needs efficiency improvements but it is the most cost-effective option when you start comparing disposal options.

Mr. Dorsey continued with his presentation, which included when to close the landfill, the costs associated with closing, and a 30-year financial comparison between an onsite landfill versus a transfer station with an onsite landfill. He clarified that this is not a complete budget, it's just comparing disposal options. A transfer option gives the County more control over expansion, closure, how long we want the facility to last, etc. Supervisor Sharp asked why we couldn't just close the landfill and eliminate those jobs. Mr. Dorsey stated that this was why he was presenting these options to the Board this evening; to allow them to decide how they wish to move forward. Mr. Cash pointed out that back in the 1980s, just about every locality had its own landfill, but now most use regional facilities instead. There followed a discussion between staff, Ms. Klappich, and the Board regarding regional landfills.

Mr. Hiss clarified for everyone that the purpose of this work session was to make the Board aware of the issues and available options, and to receive direction from the Board. Supervisor Sharp reiterated that he feels closing the landfill and eliminating jobs would be in the best interests of Bedford County, but he feels he doesn't know all the options available to him. Mr. Cash said that even if we close Cells A, B, & C, it would still be wise to continue with the permitting process for Cell C-2 so that 20-30 years from now we would have the option of going back into the landfill business we needed to do so.

Mr. Dorsey clarified that this meeting is not to determine whether to close the landfill; rather, we are here tonight to determine short-term solutions to bridge the five-year gap. He said whether to close the landfill or keep it open is a discussion for another night. He confirmed for Supervisor Tuck that the transfer station is in exactly the right location for its purpose.

Mr. Dorsey outlined capital costs, operating costs, administrative issues, staffing, permitting, weather impacts, and landfill build-out related to "onsite disposal" versus "offsite transfer plus onsite disposal". He briefly touched on tipping and hauling fees, noting these recommendations would buy a small amount of time and space, saving four months over two years. Mr. Dorsey and Ms. Klappich ended the presentation with a summary of staff's short-term recommendations to reduce the landfill waste stream, to acquire actual costs to develop a long-term disposal plan, and to modify the transfer building and the surrounding site. Mr. Dorsey noted that the time gap he is concerned with involves filling up the landfill before he has the updated transfer building. He said if we end up transferring to an offsite location like Region 2000, it will give the Board up to ten years to decide on a plan (whether to continue to ship, to expand the landfill, etc.).

Following the presentation, Mr. Dorsey, Mr. Cash, and Ms. Klappich answered clarifying questions from the Board.

Mr. Hiss reiterated the immediate concern is that we only have two to two-and-a-half years until we're at capacity, so we need to get the transfer station remodeled in order to be able to start moving trash offsite. Staff will need action from the Board at the next meeting to get the transfer station renovation process moving forward. Supervisor Sharp asked staff to investigate whether the engineering firm bears any fiscal responsibility. Mr. Cash confirmed that the original engineering firm is designing the remodeled transfer station, and that Draper Aden agrees that the station is needed. Ms. Klappich also noted that a hybrid system of both a transfer station and an onsite landfill would give the Board the most control over the operation. Mr. Dorsey said about half of our waste stream could be shipped out from the collection system directly, but it would greatly increase our hauling costs.

Mr. Dorsey stated staff would need to come back to the Board at a future meeting with a resolution for authorization to issue an RFP, and also with a Memorandum of Understanding from Region 2000 for the Board's consideration.

Mr. Hiss noted that, at the Board's direction, staff will come back before the Board with details on what a closed landfill option would look like.

The Board took a short break, and then reconvened for an update from Finance Director Susan Crawford on the Solid Waste Fund. Ms. Crawford noted the operating revenues would not cover the operating expenses this fiscal year, and this was mainly due to expenses associated with leachate and stormwater. Mr. Dorsey said this is an issue all landfills in Virginia are dealing with – they are basically being destroyed by these new weather patterns, and our soil isn't staying on the slopes.

Ms. Crawford stated we are anticipating operating revenues to be approximately \$414,000 less than operating expenditures. If we don't see the expected tonnage coming into the landfill, this number could increase to over \$800,000. It was also noted that the County subsidizes \$57 per ton of commercial trash. Ms. Crawford stated that if we were to transfer the 11,564 tons, there could be a potential of \$193,000 in savings; however, we don't know if the tonnage will be there yet. There followed a brief discussion between staff and the Board, with Mr. Cash noting there are only one or two trustees working at the landfill now, whereas there used to be seven or eight. He stated that the Chinese market for recycling has completely dried up, and the price per ton has decreased dramatically. However, if we are trying to preserve landfill space, we need to continue with our recycling programs. Mr. Cash also noted that some services that are in place for residents, such as the yard waste clean-up events and taking Christmas trees after the holiday season, provide no revenue to the County.

Mr. Hiss stated that at the next meeting, there would be a budget work session followed by the VDOT public hearing, and then the regular meeting with a public hearing on the tax rate. We will also discuss the remaining budget meeting schedule.

Supervisor Thomasson made a motion to adjourn at 7:26 pm.

Voting yes: Mr. Thomasson, Mr. Tuck, Mrs. Bansley, Mr. Sharp, Mr. Scott, Mr. Dooley, and Mr. Willis

Voting no: none

Motion passed.