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Skagit County
Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC)
Meeting Minutes
WEBINAR/CONFERENCE CALL
Tuesday, February 8, 2022

Members Present

Andy Hanson
Brian Dempsey
Carolyn Bowie
Margo Gillaspay
Michelle Metzler
Scott Thomas
Tamara Thomas
Todd Reynolds
Torrey Lautenbach

Representing

City of Mount Vernon
City of Burlington
Department of Ecology, (ex-officio/Diana Wadley)
Skagit County Public Works/Solid Waste Division, ex-officio
Haulers/Waste Management
Town of La Conner
District 2 Citizens
Skagit Steel & Recycling, Recyclers
Lautenbach Recycling, District 1 Citizen

Members Absent

Britt Pfaff-Dunton
Leo Jacobs
Matt Koegel
Not Represented
Not Represented

Representing

Skagit County Health Department, ex-officio
City of Sedro-Woolley, SWAC Vice-Chair
City of Anacortes, SWAC Chair
District 3 Citizens
Agriculture Representative

Visitors

Callie Martin
Dale Patrick
Harry Werber
Pinky Vargas
Wendy Weiker

Representing

Skagit County Public Works Solid Waste
Skagit County Public Health Department
Ridwell
Republic Services
Republic Services-Hauler

Introductions

Margo Gillaspay, requested introductions of all in attendance. Names and business titles were offered by each attendee prior to addressing agenda items.

Call to Order

Ms. Gillaspay, called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. via Webinar/Conference Call, Mount Vernon, Washington.

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Public Comments

Ms. Gillaspy, opened the floor for public comments.

There were no Public Comments.

Review and Approve Minutes

Ms. Gillaspy opened the floor to discuss the November 9, 2021 minutes.

Ms. Gillaspy, requested a Motion to Approve the November 9, 2021 minutes as written.

A Motion to Approve was made by Tamara Thomas, District 2 Citizens to approve the minutes as written. The Motion to Approve was seconded by Michelle Metzler, Waste Management. By a vote of the Membership, the Motion was unanimously passed. Ms. Gillaspy, declared the minutes of November 9, 2021 to be approved as written.

Agenda Items

A Solid Waste Advisory Committee meeting; open to the public, was held on November 9, 2021 for anyone to speak on any topic on the agenda, or items not listed on the agenda:

a. **Ridwell Presentation**

The history of the company began with a father and 6-year-old son attempting to find a way to recycle batteries responsibly. There were not local resources and considered that their neighbors might be having the same problem. They created a Facebook post to contact their neighbors. The post became a group, and the company was created. The original name of the group was called Owen's List.

Ridwell is a recycling and re-use service, with re-use being the highest goal for the materials collected from Members.

When someone signs up as a Member, Ridwell delivers a bin to their home. Members will also receive a set of re-useable printed canvas bags that are labeled with the different types of collectable materials.

Ridwell's service started in Seattle in 2018. They are now live in several cities across the States, such as Portland, Oregon, Denver, Colorado, Minneapolis, Minnesota and Austin, Texas. Since their 2018 start, Ridwell has donated about 4.5 million pounds worth of material and diverted it into recycle or re-use.

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Ridwell is now active in Whatcom and Skagit County. In just a six-month period, Ridwell has signed up 1,500 Members. They have recently expanded to Blaine, Birch Bay, Caster and Ferndale, and expects to be expanding to Burlington and Mount Vernon very soon. Ridwell's "Waitlist" page is now live at:

Ridwell.comm/join/Burlington-mt-vernon

When Ridwell reaches certain thresholds, for example, 100 sign-ups on this web page, they will do a free pickup on one of the Core Materials, which is voted on by the community of people who have already signed up.

Transparency Report

Ridwell launched a Transparency Report page a couple of months ago.

Ridwell.comm/transparency

This page was launched a couple of months ago to address where the collected materials go. The Transparency page was built to let everyone know exactly where the materials collected are going and how much contamination Ridwell is experiencing on the processing end of things.

Ridwell is diverting about 97.5% of the film-plastic materials they receive, with low contamination rates thanks in part to the conscientious Members.

Ridwell hopes to expand their services to the local Mount Vernon/Burlington Skagit area. Currently, there are no active community partners in Skagit. At this time, it is hopeful that the partnerships built in the Bellingham area s local enough to be appealing to gain the interest of other counties in the region.

Ridwell will be exploring supporting local organizations like the Food Bank in the near future.

Ridwell currently has a 2,000 square foot facility in Bellingham and does a limited amount of processing there. The processing for any donations going to the local partners happens locally. There is more processing infrastructure in Seattle and operates as something of a satellite market in Seattle at the moment. The amount of processing done at the Bellingham site is increasing. The film-plastics material is transported to Seattle for processing by the much larger team.

Ridwell has a steady base-line of materials that are collected. Certain materials are selected based on partners found in the community. The base-line materials are the Core Categories for Ridwell. Those items are going to be consistent throughout the service and are relatively fixed and will not change throughout the service. They have been identified as the core materials that people are going to have on an on-going basis.

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It's an ongoing process of identifying those partners, but really based on the needs that Ridwell is hearing from the community itself.

Core Materials

Plastic-film, textiles and shoes, and all types of light bulbs and batteries are collected from Members every two weeks if service is needed.

Every two weeks, if a Member opts into a pickup, Ridwell will collect the Core items. Members sort their materials into the appropriate bag and place it in the box for collection.

Featured Category

Ridwell offers a Featured Category which changes every two weeks.

The Featured categories are crowd-sourced from the community. Ridwell is always looking for ways of incorporating those new types of materials. It is the constant game of listening to the community and then going out and trying to find partners who can do this. The gold standard is finding local partners for those things, but sometimes do work with more national partners such as The Crayon Initiative.

These items are small portable electronics, non-perishable food, toiletries, art supplies, housewares and more.

Ridwell tries to support local community-based organizations and non-profits as much as possible with these Featured Categories. Their goal as a company is to make it as easy as possible to get rid of stuff in a responsible way, to create new re-use options for old or un-used things, and to support local communities.

The Crayon Initiative

They collect crayons, sort them by color and then melt them down to specially shaped rectangular crayons that can be used by children with special needs and motor difficulty.

Ad-Ons

Ridwell offers recycling options as a added charge on a a-la-cart basis for styrofoam, latex paint and fluorescent light tubes.

A "Fridge Guide" is provided as an easy reference chart.

Threads

It is acceptable to donate re-useable, damaged or even dirty clothes. The re-used stuff is re-used by Ridwell's partners and the damaged and unusable clothing and shoes can be recycled into things such as insulation material.

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Ridwell is constantly looking for partners in the community who they can support by collecting items that people may have in their households which could have use in the community.

Ridwell recently partnered with a local Bellingham company called Inter-Faith Coalition for their annual coat drive. Ridwell was able to collect about 450 coats from Members in just a two week period and then immediately pass them on to Inter-Faith for their members to process and distribute in the community.

Bellingham Community Partners:

Sarvey Wildlife care Center
Bellingham Food Bank
Ragfinery
Habitat for Humanity & Lydia Place
The RE Store
Allied Arts

Cost

Ridwell provides a monthly service. The cost varies between \$12.00/month and \$16.00/month, depending on what you sign up for. The minimum commitment level currently is three months. At that level, the pricing works out to \$16.00/month. The cost for signing up for a full year subscription at one time is \$144.00, which works out to \$12.00/month. Every effort is made to keep the pricing affordable.

Member Supported Subscription Program

Ridwell is launching a new program that will go live within the next couple of months. Over the holiday period, when gift cards were being sold, a fund was initiated by taking 10% of all gift card sales and putting it into a pot that could be used to subsidize memberships for people who do not feel they can afford the service.

Gift Cards

Ridwell mainly grows by word of mouth and people referring other people, which is still the primary driver of growth in terms of how the community is growing. Over the holiday period, Ridwell Members wanted to give it to friends, family and neighbors. A system was set up to purchase a gift card for a subscription to Ridwell to someone in another city that has a Ridwell service.

Service

Ridwell is primarily focused on servicing residential customers at the moment. That includes single family homes, multi-family housing, condo buildings apartments and co-housing. Ridwell is establishing more programs to work specifically with multi-family buildings so the service looks a little bit different. It would not necessarily look like every resident has a Ridwell bin, but so much as Ridwell provides different types of receptacles that the whole building can use to recycle or re-use the different types of materials that Ridwell accepts. Ridwell services a few multi-family homes currently in Bellingham, but really on the individual level.

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On the commercial side of things, Ridwell works with some businesses in Bellingham and is seeing an increasing number of businesses in Seattle who are signing up. There is no formal program for that at the moment, so there are no different Membership tiers. There are mostly small businesses that want to do the right thing with these types of materials and recycle as much as possible and minimize their footprint, so they've taken it upon themselves to sign up. It does represent some challenges for Ridwell in terms of volume and collection frequency. This could potentially be an area of opportunity in the future.

Volume

The majority of Members using the service are generating amounts that fit in the bags that Ridwell provides for most pickups. Ridwell does have the facility to manage and collect service larger loads from businesses. For residential customers, there is an interface when you opt in for a pickup, to let Ridwell know if there will be extra materials. And they can be set in a paper or plastic bag next to the Ridwell bin, as long as Ridwell has been notified so they can use the right size vehicle to accommodate the materials being collected. Currently, there are not size limits on the extra bags. There is an additional charge of \$1.00 per bag for bags that do not fit in the bin for the Core categories. Add-Ons such as styrofoam, paint and FLT's incur an extra charge, with styrofoam being the most expensive at \$9.00 for a 30-gallon garbage bag because of the expense to Ridwell to recycle this material.

Pick-Up Services

Residential pick-ups are made by Ridwell's staff of drivers in Bellingham. The team here looks a little different than in other markets due to being such a small operation. There is a team of 5 drivers and one Ridwell van. There is one full-time driver in Bellingham and the rest are working in their own vehicles on a contract basis.

Permitting-Solid Waste

Ridwell does not believe that the Seattle site is required to hold a Solid Waste permit at the moment. There is an on-going conversation with this and the Portland, Oregon operation with the City and local authority as to whether that type of licensing is required.

Collection Events

(Skagit County contract with Ridwell for collection and hauling for residential events.)
Guideline: The material must be the type already collected by Ridwell.

Ridwell does not want to step on anyone's else's toes in terms of existing garbage and recycle services. Ridwell sees their services as complimentary to existing services. For the types of materials that Ridwell does collect, that others do not, such as styrofoam, Ridwell has done partnerships with local authorities in the past. One such partnership is with the City of Redmond to collect styrofoam specifically from residents in that area, and has been very successful on multiple occasions. Ridwell would be open to servicing that type of event.

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b. CROP Work Plan

The Solid Waste System Governance Board(SWSGB) approved the Amendment to the Solid Waste Management Plan, the Contamination Reduction Outreach Plan(CROP) in December of 2021. The Plan will now go to the Cities and Towns for adoption as their approved Solid Waste Plan. A proof of approval from the SWSGB is required to go out to the Cities and Towns.

c. Legislative Update

The Organic Materials Collection and Management issue has raised a lot of questions. The SWSGB has requested a briefing from SWAC on this topic and how it will affect the county.

The document states that the Governments must provide weekly collection service of organic materials to all residents by 2027. Also, Counties will need to update their Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan(SWMP) again, and local governments must also approve procedures to procure and use compost. There will be exceptions, and those that would apply to Skagit County are unincorporated areas of Skagit County that are outside of the UGA. If you are in an incorporated area of Skagit County, you are inside a UGA, but not sure if UGA's are required to have the garbage pickup. If you get garbage pick-up, you automatically get organic pick-up as well.

Concerns

Rate increase.

Capacity issues and processing all the organic material.

Loss of Solid Waste tonnage coming across the Transfer Station Scales and for Haulers picking up the materials as solid waste.

The Bill has been recently updated, but is still in discussions.

Troy Lautenbach/Lautenbach Recycling serviced on the committee who wrote the Bill and testified on the Bill. He expects that the Bill will get passed this year, but most likely in next years session. He would be a good source to contact for more information.

Organics collections is going to be offered curbside to everyone within the municipal zones. It will be like curbside recycling in the sense that curbside recycling is not something you can choose whether or not you get it, it's just automatically part of the Solid Waste services in Municipal areas. We would just finally be adding organics to that.

Some discussions reflect that there doesn't seem to be any accommodation for the infrastructure. There's a lot of good intentions for pickup up the materials, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you have the capacity to compost it or process it in any other way. It's possible that there may be a little "cart-before-the-horse" happening.

It is a concern whether this county has the capacity to even compost that much material. It is not likely if everything that's generated out there is collected. With those kind of

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pressures on compost facilities, what sort of ability do the individual facilities have to be able to limit the types of material they take. Food waste takes a lot of specialized handling and equipment. It's marvelous for the companies that are invested, but they aren't all. There would definitely be a need for campus expansion at facilities such as Skagit Soils. There would perhaps be a need for more sites to open and then be permitted.

Skagit Soils is currently in the process of expansion.

Accepting materials requires a compatible size facility to process those materials. Permitting those facilities is an extremely difficult and lengthy process. It is very important that the Municipalities start putting it in the bidding process that a certain amount of compost is used. The Cities need to make sure they start incorporating that into their language plan.

It's already in law and has been for a long time, but doesn't always happen. There should be more incentives put on that part, since that would be the part that you would want to have first. You would want the market first before you start generating all this material.

Compostable Packaging Regulation is still being explored as to what can or cannot be accepted. There is still some confusion on what is compostable or recyclable.

The part that is so difficult and expensive to handle is the contaminants such as plastic forks, foil that ends up in a curbside recycle bin and even the plastic stickers on organic fruits.

Given the enthusiasm and passion around this issue, as part of the Stakeholder Group out of Zero Waste Washington, it is a short session and not likely to make it if it hasn't already died, it would be of interest for this group to keep tabs on that and that Stake Holder Group going forward since it is likely to pop up again next year. Making sure that interest in the key elements in that Bill as it moves forward are covered given timelines and capacity and permitting and all the technical issues as well as the aspirational and environmental responsibility, we all have in this work. It's complicated, it takes time, money and comes back to rate payers so it makes sense for this group to have a voice at that table and track that work.

The Bill's purpose is to hone in on green-house gasses and reduce the amount of methane.

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Announcements/New Business

Ms. Gillaspy, opened the floor to address any announcements or new business.

Grant Funding

Funding has shifted away from Community Education as it existed in the past. The focus will be on residential collection events in the next 2-year grant cycle. Feed-back from the group is welcomed on how to cooperate and work with haulers and collectors to form contracts with them so that when we host residential collection events we can get good materials from residents

The Core Materials that are collected by Ridwell are also materials that would qualify for our collection events. There will also be some Community Outreach and Education at those collection events as well.

Solid Waste will host a Master Composter Recycler training on-line starting March 15, 2022 and run through April, on Tuesday evenings.

Public Comments

Ms. Gillaspy, opened the floor to address any public comments.

There were no public comments.

Unfinished Business

Ms. Gillaspy, opened the floor to address any unfinished business.

There was none.

Adjourn

Ms. Gillaspy, thanked everyone. The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:00 p.m.