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Skagit County  
Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC)  
Microsoft Teams Meeting Minutes  
Skagit County Conference Room, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon, WA  
Wednesday, April 12, 2023

**Members Present**

Andy Hanson  
Brian Dempsey  
Leo Jacobs  
Margo Gillaspay  
Matt Koegel  
Olivia Carros  
Tamara Thomas  
Todd Reynolds  
Torrey Lautenbach

**Representing**

City of Mount Vernon  
City of Burlington  
City of Sedro-Woolley, SWAC Vice-Chair  
Skagit County Public Works/Solid Waste Division, ex-officio  
City of Anacortes, SWAC Chair  
Department of Ecology, Regional Planner & Grant Manager  
District 2 Citizens  
Skagit Steel & Recycling, Recyclers  
Lautenbach Recycling, District 1 Citizen

**Members Absent**

Britt Pfaff-Dunton  
Marcella Manibusan  
Scott Thomas  
Not Represented  
Not Represented

**Representing**

Skagit County Health Department, ex-officio  
Waste Management, Hauler/Public Sector, Manager  
Town of La Conner  
District 3 Citizens  
Agriculture Representative

**Visitors**

Carolyn Moulton  
Dale Patrick  
Heather Lopes  
Kate Smith  
Landon Campbell  
Laura Moser  
Nick Harbert  
Pinky Vargas  
  
Porter Cooper  
Troy Lautenbach  
Steve Gilmore

**Representing**

Lautenbach Recycling  
Environmental Public Health, Skagit County Public Works  
Environmental Public Health, Skagit County Public Works  
WSU Skagit Extension  
City of Mount Vernon  
Waste Management, Hauler  
Waste Management, Hauler  
Republic Services, Municipal Relations,  
Skagit County Account Manager  
Republic Services, Operations Manager  
Lautenbach Recycling  
Republic Services

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**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 1:00 p.m. at the Skagit Conference Room, Mount Vernon, Washington.

**Public Comments**

Ms. Gillaspay, opened the floor for public comments.

There were no Public Comments.

**Review and Approve Minutes**

Ms. Gillaspay opened the floor to discuss the January 11, 2023 minutes.

Ms. Gillaspay, requested a Motion to Approve the January 11, 2023 minutes as written.

A Motion to Approve was made by Leo Jacobs, City of Sedro-Woolley to approve the minutes as written. The Motion to Approve was seconded by Andy Hanson, City of Mount Vernon. By a vote of the Membership, the Motion was unanimously passed. Ms. Gillaspay, declared the minutes of January 11, 2023 to be approved as written.

**Agenda Items**

A Solid Waste Advisory Committee meeting, open to the public, was held on April 12, 2023 for anyone to speak on any topic on the agenda, or items not listed on the agenda:

a. Long Haul RFP Discussion

Part of the RFP process is to post the RFP, which was posted this summer. Proposers were given the opportunity to submit questions. The County responded to those questions. The deadline date to submit their proposals was the end of February. Since then, the Counties internal review board has been reviewing proposals and conducting interviews.

The County received a total of three (30 responses, namely, Waste Management, Republic Services and H Cycle, a new company moving into the area.

Today's meeting is an opportunity to discuss the proposals and offer questions.

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### Republic Services

Republic is a current service for the County. They are posing the same service they currently offer/provide. Their trucks drive to the rail-spur and switch bins there, the bins get loaded on a BNSF train and delivered to Roosevelt Landfill. There is a backup plan relating to any rail issues during the initial trucking leg in place for Republic Services.

### Waste Management

They are proposing a truck-to-truck transfer close to Hwy. 20. Their drivers would drive there, then transfer to Waste Management drivers or their own contracted driver. The bins would then be delivered to Argo Rail Yard in Seattle, and get loaded onto Union Pacific Trains, then delivered to Columbia Ridge. The service would be truck to truck, not leaving the County on the rail spur.

### H Cycle

They are based out of California. They are proposing a hydrogen plant in Whatcom County. The material would be taken there, sorted out what can't go through the burning process. Most of the organic material would be converted into hydrogen fuel. They are not sure yet how they would handle the remaining material, possibly disposed of at the Transfer Station. The proposal is not complete at this time since the Plant is not expected to open until 2026.

Truck to Truck Transportation vs. Rail Transport - Could there be an advantage to get containers.

### Republic Services

Containers here go right on the rail, the only part that is trucking is when it arrives at the Landfill up 5 miles. In the event that there could be another set-back with rail, trucking would be used as a backup plan.

Republic Services is going to expand the inter-modal doubling the capacity for containers. In the past, the 23-26 containers that came in disappeared immediately. There will be triple the number of containers available, and the rail will have the capacity to have 50 containers. In the event that a daily switch was not possible, there will still be enough to roll over for another day or two because there will be extra containers. (Page 13-sketch of proposed rail spur).

### H Cycle

They signed on as a proposed Hauler for Lautenbach Recycling. Lautenbach will be the transport provider from their Facility from Skagit to Ferndale. Lautenbach agreed to provide trucking for H Cycle if they got the Facility built and/or got the contract. Lautenbach would pick up at the Transfer Station site and transport to their facility and return with containers or trailers. Lautenbach will be a transportation company if they would need one.

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### Republic Services

Depending on the permitting timeline, the expansion will be about one year out. The Dahlstedt family is working with Lautenbach to cleanup the site for North West Hardwoods.

Republic will transport from their Facility for disposal on rail-spur.

Waste Management will take it to their rail-spur.

H Cycle proposed to build a Hydrogen Plant in Ferndale, WA. It would get taken directly to their Plant near the oil refinery. H Cycle proposed to back-haul the residuals back to the County and potentially let them decide what to do with it.

Lautenbach was asked to be the transportation company like they've done with Waste Management and others. Lautenbach was not involved in their process, but just as a transporter.

The RFP is for a 10-year term. The last contract ran for 30 years with the original contract being signed in 1983, with 2 10-year extensions.

When rail was new for some Counties, all of the infrastructure that had to be put in place, all the equipment put in place, the containers was significantly expensive and had to be spread out over a long period of time to keep the cost down for the citizens of the County. Now that the infrastructure is in place, there is no need for those long terms.

If everything is paid off, why could it be more expensive now is a good question. Everything that both companies purchased 30 years ago is paid off now. There is still on-going maintenance, on-going equipment replacement. The railroads are buying new equipment. Rail cars and chassis are not able to run 30 years. The big cost is in the rail. The rail is not being replaced every 5-10 years. There is some on-going replacement with the truck base and rial ties.

Two of Republic's biggest cost has been labor increases and container cost. Due to supply chain issues, the cost of those containers use to be about \$12,000-\$15,000. The cost last year was \$40,000 each, due to all of the increases. There is also hyper-inflation, steel shortages and supply issues. Fuel cost also increased.

A good example would be Thurston County is starting May 1 with a new contract. The 150 containers were expected to cost \$2 million, but actually cost \$4 million.

When the original contracts were formed in the early 1990's, they were long-term agreements as well to match up with the service contracts. Those were 28-year contracts, or legacy agreements. They expired during the term of this agreement. The railroad had limited ability, to adjust rates every year.

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Republic Services sees a little bit of savings in regard to the amount of volume and the turnaround in putting it on the rail.

In the Spring of 2022, the railroads reduced their work force with layoffs when things ramped up, they weren't ready. It's not a simple hiring process, there is a significant training process program if they don't get the old staff back.

Waste Management has less County contracts than Republic Services does. Their government disposal customers have never had a shortage. They prioritize them keeping in mind that service to the public touches everybody and is important to keep the facilities operating if possible.

### Waste Management (trains)

When the bins go down to the railyard, they build a uni-train. That on train gets built there and goes directly to the landfill. The Seattle train will generally run 5-6 a week. The trip is 17 hours to the landfill. The train sits there for about 24 hours to unload the full ones and put empties on. It's about one day there and one day back, one day to load and unload, roughly a 3-day trip. If we have a 3-day turn and need 10 containers, we must have 30 in the mix, assuming the service is consistent. There is still some trucking done on their landfill to move trains around. There is storage for trains. A full train is 85-100 feet in length.

### Republic Services

The year 2022 taught us a lot. All of the Counties, Snohomish, Island, and Skagit have grown tremendously. Being dependent on the rail service, they needed to ensure there was some contingency. As they went through the process, they discovered that the most important thing that they could do was to expand all of their inter-modal. Everett is where the trains are built. They are in the process of expanding their Everett inter-modal. That project should be completed by the end of 2023. That process should also help regarding help make sure things get here and turned around a lot faster. They are also expanding Sumas to hopefully be able to build uni-trains there as well. They will be able to do 50 cars at that expansion. Those three things will help regarding turn-around with trains and capacity. Everett will be completed first, then Skagit next. Things are looking positive. They have permitting in place already for their rail for industrial storm water. North West Hardwoods has an Industrial Stormwater in place as well, and may be transferrable. Those things will allow for expansion as quickly as possible.

We learned it was necessary to expand our inter-modals, and also that a lot of contracts have been in place, such as 50 years with BNSF, things have been running so long that people just didn't have to communicate that much about it. That changed a lot last year. Republic started having monthly meetings with BNSF, as well as meeting with the Federal Government to have more accountability with rail partners. Both rails were accountable to the Federal Government. Solid Waste has also been involved in the meetings and accountability as well. The silver lining is the increase in communication now since 2022. It allowed Republic Services to be ahead of the ball regarding communicating during any delays. Communication improved dramatically and they are

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all working together now on expansions and applying for Federal Grants to get money to improve the inter-modals. There is now support from Legislature and BNSF. When it gets to the landfill, it arrives at the bottom of the hill and goes 5 miles up a private road right into the Landfill.

Because there are inter-modals, they switched dependents with BNSF. A switch is a project work for them. Railroads do not like project work. They like grab and go. By expanding the inter-modals, we are providing less work opportunities for BNSF. They will have to do less work and that would benefit service. Instead of doing a switch a day at Skagit, if they do a switch a week, we are golden.

Republic Services system is based on two uni-trains per day on the Westside, and one on the Eastside coming from Spokane every 2 and a half days. Republic Services operates 6 days per week at Roosevelt. There are 12 uni-trains from the West and about 3 from the East during the week. We may have taken BNSF's service for granted since they have been so good for so many years. We felt each other's pain and knew we needed to work together to solve the problem.

The Landfill is a gas energy facility. Republic Services captures and re-sells that to the P.U.D., as the only landfill that does renewable gas naturally. They are an environmental solution because they look at the entire picture at how they can use that power and not have it go up into the air. They are the only recognized landfill in Washington State that is exempted from current ordinances around methane capture. Their collected stats show they are capturing 95-97% of the gas at the landfill that is being turned into renewable natural gas being pumped directly into the pipeline there, pipeline grade clean, 70% cleaner than natural gas in general. P.U.D. has a 20-year contract with P.S.E. to utilize that natural gas in Western Washington for transportation fuel. The P.U.D. invested about \$80 million dollars in infrastructure at their landfill. Looking at gas capturing systems, every landfill is very unique. Republic is pushing 300 gas wells at their landfill because of the partnership with P.U.D. From a green-house standpoint, it the worse gas out there. By putting the container right on the rail here in the County, the County will be saving 620,000 truck miles per year. One hundred fifty miles round-trip X 4,100 trips per year, at current volume. Whatcom, Island and Snohomish Counties are using Republic Services. Whatcom County Solid Waste has advocated their responsibility for Solid Waste. They don't go out for bid, they don't provide anything to do with disposal.

The County Committee, Britt Pfaff-Dunton, Dale Patrick and Eddie Nersten/Solid Waste Transfer Station Manager and Mike See/Public Works Assistant Director are reviewing the RFP and hope to complete that soon and present recommendations to SWAC. The recommendations will then be taken to each Jurisdiction. Next, there will be a vote on the Recommendation. From there, it will be presented to the Solid Waste System Governance Board and then to the Skagit County Commissioner's for signature.

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b. Committee Members

Ms. Tamara Thomas will be leaving the SWAC Membership. Current Members will expire at the end of April.

Torrey Lautenbach, Lautenbach Recycling moved out of District 1 and will move to District 3 Citizens.

Kate Smith will be the Agriculture representative.

Carolyn Moulton will be the District 1 Citizens representative.

Vacancies:

Towns, Lyman, Hamilton, Concrete – Citizen representatives.

These three positions will be advertised.

A new Member Resolution will be prepared.

**Announcements/New Business**

Callie Martin, who manages the Master Composter Program returned recently from maternity leave, did not sponsor a program this year.

We do have a Hauler Representative. Michelle was the representative the previous year. We could switch back to Waste Management for the following year.

City of Sedro-Woolley/Leo Jacobs

The City does have an Inter-Local Agreement with the County to be a Solid Waste Advisory Committee Member on the Solid Waste Board. The Agreement is expected to expire in the year 2028.

**Public Comments**

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

There were no public comments.

**Unfinished Business**

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

There was no Unfinished Business.

**Adjourn**

Ms. Gillaspay, thanked everyone and called the meeting to an end.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:55 p.m.