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Skagit County  
Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC)  
Meeting Minutes  
**WEBINAR/CONFERENCE CALL**  
Thursday, August 18, 2022

**Members Present**

Andy Hanson  
Olivia Karras  
Leo Jacobs  
Margo Gillaspay  
Matt Koegel  
Robert Rutledge  
Scott Thomas  
Tamara Thomas  
Torrey Lautenbach

**Representing**

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

**Members Absent**

Brian Dempsey  
Britt Pfaff-Dunton  
Todd Reynolds  
Not Represented  
Not Represented

**Representing**

City of Burlington  
Skagit County Health Department, ex-officio  
Skagit Steel & Recycling, Recyclers  
District 3 Citizens  
Agriculture Representative

**Visitors**

Dale Patrick  
Heather Lopez  
Pinky Vargas

**Representing**

Environmental Public Health, Skagit County Public Works  
Environmental Public Health, Skagit County Public Works  
Republic Services, Municipal Relations,  
Skagit County Account Manager

**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 June 8, 2022 minutes.

Ms. Gillaspy, requested a Motion to Approve the June 8, 2022 minutes as written.

A Motion to Approve was made by Scott Thomas, Town of LaConner to approve the minutes as written. The Motion to Approve was seconded by Torrey Lautenbach, Lautenbach Industries. By a vote of the Membership, the Motion was unanimously passed. Ms. Gillaspy, declared the minutes of June 8, 2022 to be approved as written.

**Agenda Items**

A Solid Waste Advisory Committee meeting, open to the public, was held on August 18, 2022 for anyone to speak on any topic on the agenda, or items not listed on the agenda:

a. **Rail Service Status**

The Skagit County Transfer and Recycling Station located at the Ovenell/Mount Vernon site closed to the public to incoming self-haulers for garbage disposal. The closure dates ran from August 11 (Thursday) through the 16<sup>th</sup>. The Transfer Station remained opened for Commercial Haulers. Bins were provided to the Transfer Station by Republic Services. The Transfer Station trucked bins on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> as well as using the rail service and so was able to stay open for the Commercial Haulers.

The reason for the closure was due to an equipment breakdown on Wednesday of both “pickers” that Republic Services uses to unload the bins. One “picker” has been repaired and is fully operational as of August 17. The second “picker” is undergoing transmission repairs, and should be back on-line within the next couple of days.

*Transfer Station Backup Contingency Plan:*

A contract was implemented for hauling with pick-up and drop-offs done in Everett while sharing the Everette intermodal with containers. An agreement was worked out with Snohomish County to pull containers, 12 – 14 per day, from the Everette supply railyard that was able to accommodate the Commercial material coming in. A future long-term back-up plan is being created.

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Both Ms. Gillaspy and Ms. Vargas attended a morning meeting in Snohomish County that included Representatives from Senator Cantwell's office, a BNSF representative, and Republic Services representatives.

The discussion addressed the on-going struggles in this Region. It was recognized that there is not only a railroad issue, but there is also a capacity issue with there being no spare room available at the Transfer Station site or at the rail yard to store garbage.

The smaller satellite locations located in Sauk/Concrete and Clear Lake are open on the weekends and provide a second resource for garbage disposal. Those sites do not accept large loads or construction/demolition debris, but can accommodate household garbage disposal. In the case such as contractors, management instructed staff to ask if they could hold onto their load for a couple more days. This is not an ideal solution since contractors need to get to the next job. It was not recommended that Solid Waste leave the County, but we know that it happened.

A flurry of complaints from Face Book stemmed out of Lake Cavanaugh from the closure situation. Apparently, there was a fairly large size load dumped at a creek in Lake Cavanaugh. There is typically a large amount of illegal dumping that does take place in that area under normal operational circumstances.

The closure issue was discussed with our Litter Crew supervisor. He had not witnessed any excessive or out of the ordinary dumping. It needs to be determined if the Lake Cavanaugh dumping took place on private property or on a right-of-way. It should be reported to the Litter Crew for collection. If it's on a county right-of-way, we may be able to pick it up. If the dump happened on private property, then the Skagit County Public Health Department can contact the property owner.

When collections begin at 6:00 a.m., it is difficult to receive an e-mail or phone call at 7:30 a.m./8:00 a.m. advising that the Transfer Station can't take a load, when the anticipation is to bring in 80 tons of garbage. It worked out well this past weekend with 3 automated trucks carrying 26 tons. But leaving them on too long will start to create issues such as smell and rodent infestation if garbage is left on trucks.

Nothing is currently set up with other Counties. If these kind of rial issues happen again, Republic would be contacted to find out if trucking would be an option. It was a good stop-gate option even though it took a couple of days to put in place.

It would not be ideal to send out 12 or even 20 trucks to Everett, or get into a position where no garbage can be taken there since it would create multiple issues including with the entire County with residents needing to get garbage somewhere. This would involve drop-off stations and loading up 30 yarders to run out.

We want to avoid a scenario where we have to run to Snohomish or Whatcom County and pack trucks to the fullest extent possible to eliminate travel. We don't want to be in a

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situation where we have to reach out to our respective elected officials to question how we are going to move forward with this.

Republic Services has been struggling with container inventory which got held up in China. A separate order from the United States is slated to arrive by the end of September. There will be more containers in the supply chain which should help alleviate the shortage. Therefore, Republic should be able to leave extra containers at the Transfer Station. This should help with a short-term solution assuming the extra containers do arrive when expected. Extra containers on the floor would help in giving the Cities the lead time needed to know that the Transfer Station can take in their Solid Waste.

### *Transfer Station Long-Term Plan:*

The Plan is expected to be a long-term solution. There are no spare empty bins on the ground at the rail-spur at this time. Working with Republic Services and BNSF to get the tipping floor clear is the first step. It would be ideal to have a days' worth of bins available on the floor. This has not been the case for quite a while.

The larger goal is to expand the railyard. If we had another line added, longer trains could be brought in, more bins could be stacked, and it could hold more material so more bins could be brought in and out of that railyard. With the current length of the rail line, it can only fit a train of a certain size.

There are essentially multiple issues driving the setbacks. The railroad lost a lot of staff in January. There have been shortages on switches throughout the week in not getting a regular train. BNSF is still not up to full staff for this Region at this time. There are the container issues and more garbage intake. There was also the equipment breakdown that further complicated the situation. The Transfer Station is running at full capacity and cannot maintain operations with even just one day without a train.

### *Shut Down Floor Capacity:*

In the event of a shutdown, if the floor is completely clear, it could hold a maximum of one – two days of garbage in the summer months. When the Winter ice storm occurred, the Transfer Station did not get a train for roughly four days in the month of January. There was about four days' worth of garbage on the floor with sufficient bins available to fill up. During the Summer peak season, the tipping floor can hold approximately one days' worth of garbage.

The County Transfer Station's infrastructure had an upgrade ten years ago and is over-capacitated at this time. There have not been any discussions regarding expansion. The Station is built out at the space where its located. When the Transfer Station has the containers it requires, it runs really well and fills them quite quickly. The Transfer Station is not built to maintain storage and therefore, does not have extra capacity. There may be future discussions to put in place long-term guidelines to effectively handle situations similar to the current one.

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The amount of generated garbage has been increasing by about 5% each year, particularly during the summer months, which could be tied to the increasing population growth within Skagit County. If more material were diverted to organics and recyclables, it could help.

Composition Studies done within the tipping floor could present our opportunity to eliminate the need for expansion with more diversion methods.

Lautenbach Recycling Industries has an Agreement in place for their business, that when the railyard fails, they have a fail-safe in place that allows them to haul to other locations.

Transfer Station office staff have been instructed to refer to the “Recycling and Re-Use Opportunities in Skagit County” flyer in referring those who wish to recycle their demolition debris and roofing materials to Lautenbach Recycling as a resource.

Lautenbach does accept a mixed load of construction and demolition from a household project. There are rules addressing asbestos reports. New construction is typically not a problem to sort. They do not accept loads of insulation; the loads must be a high recycle content percentage. Lautenbach could be an option for some of the Cities as well when the Transfer Station is closed for their construction/demolition boxes.

The last two years has been like the perfect storm for everyone, not only in the garbage world, but all the way through. Garbage is such a major thing that when there is a disruption, it’s pretty major. Everyone has garbage and it doesn’t stop and creates other problems, so we all do need to have a fail-safe in place.

### b. Long-Haul RFP

The current long-haul contract will expire next September 30, 2023. Whether the next contract is held by Republic Services, or another vendor, they will need to know the situation before they look into expansion. Expansion will likely take about one year for construction. The backup plan will be added to the next long-haul contract. The Long-Haul Specifications do refer to levels of service and what the Skagit County expectations are.

The attached documents include the proposed RFP, currently under Legal review. An advertising date has not yet been determined. It will then be posted to the Skagit County website and remain open for 90 days. There will be an opportunity for those interested to have a tour. A best-mutual time to meet for everyone will be used rather than a standard RFP one-and-only date and will be more accommodating. Questions during submission date will likely be in December. The internal review will be done to ensure packages are complete. There will be a committee to further review them for content. There is a scoring card included that explains how certain items are ranked. Interviews with perspective firms will follow. The SWAC and Governance Board will be a part of the review process. The final step will be the execution of the contract. The Scope of Services is based off the Snohomish RFP as they are very similar. The term of the RFP

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will be set for ten years, with an option for two additional renewal terms of ten years upon mutual agreement.

It will include requirements to add in language to circumvent some of the problems currently at hand, like performance criteria.

There is an Operation Plan, a Emergency Response Plan, and an Alternate Plan as well. Language will be included to address “Response Failure”. The RFP is currently being reviewed to add “Contingency Plan” language.

c. 2023 Budget

A draft has just been completed. A tonnage estimate of 5% increase is planned.

Starting in October of next year, under a new contract, there will probably be a significant increase in what the disposal rates will be.

**Announcements/New Business**

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

It is unknown if the Whitmarsh Project is going forward next Summer. We are still waiting on approval for some of the permits. It is still unclear what the insurance is going to pay. The construction will hopefully start in the year 2023 or 2024. There is grant funding in place for this project. It is estimated to be a \$10/\$12 million dollar construction project.

The next SWAC meeting will hopefully be scheduled for October.

**Public Comments**

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

Skagit County will be hosting a tire round-up in Concrete. It is tentatively set for September 26 (must occur on a Monday), on a Fire District property right off of Highway 20. It will be a FREE tire disposal event for Skagit County residents. A limit has not yet been set. Our tire recycler will provide two containers on that site – no tractor tires will be accepted.

**Unfinished Business**

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

There was no Unfinished Business.

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**Adjourn**

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

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:45 p.m.