

League of Women Voters Mid-Hudson Region
Materials Management Committee
Minutes of Meeting April 5, 2016

Call to Order: 5:52 p.m.

Present: Kathy OConnor (Chair), Jolanda Jansen (President), Soyal Smalls (Secretary), Sarah Womer, Anne Needham, Kristen Faughnan, Dare Thompson, Margot Becker, Susan Holland, Noa Simons, Tracey Bartels

Absent: Kathie Beinkafner, Cindy Lanzetta

MINUTES Motion made to approve the minutes of the 03-08-16 meeting (Jolanda, Susan). All in favor.

GUEST SPEAKER TRACEY BARTELS

Ulster County legislator Tracey Bartels spoke about the Ulster County Styrofoam ban. The ban passed almost a year ago, is currently in effect for chain foodservice establishments, and comes into effect for all other UC foodservice establishments in May.

The ban is among the most comprehensive in the country. It applies to a broad range of institutions, from commercial establishments to schools, hospitals, fire departments that host dinners, and so on. It does not require Styrofoam alternatives to be compostable or recyclable.

Tracey met recently with people involved in the ban's implementation to see how the process was working, and no problems were reported. The ban passed very easily when it was voted into law last year. The Styrofoam industry was occupied opposing New York City's ban, and did not raise objections in Ulster. Chain establishments were very cooperative. No one spoke against the bill during the hearing process, and it passed with support from both sides of the aisle.

The ban, however, is now becoming a contested issue. Ken Ronk, new Chairman of the Ulster County Legislature, has proposed repealing the ban. One of his main objections is that the hardship clause requires businesses to show a tax return if filing for exemption, which he believes to be an invasion of privacy. In addition, he has suggested that people simply prefer the experience of Styrofoam.

Tracey believes the ban has enough support to avoid repeal, but that they may have to go through the process. This would likely happen in May, and she would appreciate League support at that time. In particular, it would be helpful if we attended meetings, wrote letters, and had people living in the districts of major opponents contact their legislators. Tracey will keep us informed about this.

Tracey expects there to be some growing pains as the law becomes fully effective. Though all establishments that the Health Department has regulatory power over have been notified of the change, not all may understand the new rules. She believes that providing a list of Styrofoam alternatives and their prices may make the transition easier. She also believes that providing stickers so that businesses can promote their participation in the law as a positive, may smooth the transition and increase buy-in.

If we see local Ulster County establishments continuing to use Styrofoam after the ban becomes fully effective in May, it would be best to bring the issue up first with the business itself. They may not be aware of the law or may be confused about it. It would be best for everyone if we are not too harsh in enforcing the ban while it is new. If cooperation does not ensue, we can suggest to the Health Department that they prod the business with a call. If these approaches do not work, or if the establishment in question is a chain (due to the fact that the law will have been in effect for six months for chain establishments), we can call the Health Department and file a formal complaint. This will start the enforcement process, which begins with a warning and later escalates to a fine if the business does not comply.

Tracey also spoke about the work that the Ulster County Solid Waste Management Improvement Commission is doing in trying to find a local/regional waste management solution for Ulster County. She believes that it is very important to have such a system, as dealing with waste locally changes people's investment in it and the ways they approach it. A local/regional system would also be financially prudent.

Finally, Tracey discussed other issues she is working on. Her main focus currently is on "toxic toys." She also would like to work on banning plastic bags, but is currently holding off as this was controversial and legally complicated when explored 10 years ago.

OLD BUSINESS

PAINT STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITIES

Dare is still working to discover the issue that is holding up the Paint Stewardship legislation in the Assembly. The bill (A06199) has been passed to the Assembly's Environmental Conservation Committee. Steve Englebright, who lives in Suffolk County, is Chair of that Committee.

Dare has contacted our League President in the Suffolk County Region, to see if some light can be shed on the situation through that avenue. We're awaiting a response there.

Kathy O suggested contacting PaintCare Inc to let them know that the League supports their efforts to effect paint stewardship legislation in New York State. Jolanda supported her suggestion, and it was decided that we would send a letter to the Executive Director of PaintCare.

UC SWM IC

Jolanda and Kathie B visited the Taylor Biomass Energy facility. It was an informative trip, and they left with a better understanding of the technical workings of the proposed gasification plant. They have a conference call scheduled with a chemist to learn further details.

Jolanda provided an overview of the process that the Taylor facility will use. First, recycling will be removed from the incoming waste stream. Next, waste will be ground into small pieces. Then, the remaining material will be heated in a low-oxygen environment, producing syngas (a synthetic gas made up of nitrogen, hydrogen, and other gasses). Finally, the syngas will be cleaned, and then burned to power an electricity-generating turbine. The residue from the first step of the process will consist largely of sand/silicone, much of which will be recycled for use within the plant. The emissions from burning the cleaned syngas will consist of water and carbon dioxide.

It was mentioned that using this system means that the organic materials are not being composted. Jolanda replied that many compost facilities that deal with municipal solid waste produce low-quality compost. Noa suggested that this is not always the case: in other states, the compost produced in some such facilities is approved for use on food.

Next, Jolanda discussed some of Ulster County's options for dealing with solid waste. Currently, the County pays \$52/ton plus tipping fees to transport waste to Seneca Meadows. Taylor could be a cost-effective option, particularly if rising demand from NYC drives up tipping fees at Seneca Meadows. Another option would be to work with neighboring counties (such as Green, Columbia, and Sulli-

van Counties) to build a local solution. In that case, the development and operating costs could be shared.

Tracey expressed skepticism about Taylor's willingness to accept unsorted waste, worrying that if people became used to not needing to sort, it would be difficult to reverse that expectation in the future. Jolanda suggested that, given the current low price of oil, Taylor's system of recovering energy from plastic might in fact make more sense than recycling it. Tracey pointed out that the price of oil is likely to rise again in the future.

Jolanda agreed that future conditions are hard to predict, and that this complicates the Commission's job considerably. Jolanda stated that she and Kathie B agree that the Commission's recommendation is likely to be more of a "moral" than a cost-driven one.

HUDSON VALLEY REGIONAL COUNCIL

Kathy O reported that we were invited by Rich Schiafo to attend the next meeting of the Hudson Valley Regional Council's Solid Waste Group. This meeting is scheduled for April 18th, and will include a discussion of the long-term viability of the Council's Materials Management Group. Jolanda suggested that one of our members attend the meeting, and if possible, join the proposed group. Sarah stated that she will attend the April 18th meeting.

Kathy O also spoke highly of the Mid-Hudson Regional Sustainability Plan, and encouraged everyone to read its materials management section. Jolanda mentioned that many committee members were involved in the plan's creation, but noted that it has been difficult to carry the work forward in a meaningful way after the creation of the report.

UCRRA

Kathy O reminded us that UCCRA is holding a household hazardous on April 16th (advance registration required).

Kathy O reported that at the last UCRRA meeting, Manna Jo Greene had spoken to the UCCRA Board about the activities of the UC SWM IC. The Board members had not known most of the information, and were very interested in learning more about the Commission's activities. Jolanda reported that members of both the Board and the Commission would be traveling together to Seneca Meadows

and Oneida-Herkimer, which would likely give them an opportunity to discuss this subject.

DUTCHESS COUNTY RECYCLING/COMPOSTING EVENTS

Jolanda reported that we will be participating in three upcoming events: Poughkeepsie Earth Day (April 16th), Tivoli Arbor Day (April 30th), and Marbletown Trash Fest (June 4th). We will have a pop-up tent, tables and chairs, informational resources (including footage of an interview with compost educator Jeff Urbin), and children's activities. We will also have a LWV banner for our tent.

Children's activities will include a materials-sorting game and an opportunity to paint and fill biodegradable planters. Noa mentioned that she has found that children enjoy looking at compost, and offered to provide compost if we would like to include an activity like this.

MARBLETOWN TRASH FEST

Margot reported that the arts side of Trash Fest is coming together well. There will be a large-scale sculpture at the transfer station; Wired Gallery has signed on to participate in the event, as has the Stone Ridge Public Library; and there will be a concert on June 5th featuring musicians on "trash" instruments.

For educational events, Cornell Cooperative Extension will host a composting workshop on June 18th; a representative from WeHateToWaste.com will speak on reducing personal waste streams; there will be a discussion on single-use plastic bags and a screening of the film *Bag It*; and the Town Executive will sign a voluntary plastic straw resolution at the opening event at the transfer station on June 4th.

We will attend the June 4th opening event with our pop-up tent and activities.

Margot is still developing parts of Trash Fest, and would welcome participation or suggestions. She would be happy to have more events, either during the opening event or later in the month. She is accepting book and movie recommendations for the book list she is compiling. She also is particularly interested in how she can continue to involve the public in this issue after Trash Fest ends.

Margot will send us a JPEG of the poster for Trash Fest as the schedule solidifies.

Finally, Jolanda suggested that UCCRA's new recycling coordinator attend the opening event. This would allow the coordinator to meet people and become

more known. Since she and UCCRA are long-term fixtures, this could also provide a venue for continuing the discussion.

NEW BUSINESS

- o Sarah had a good experience on the radio on March 21st. She suggested Noa as a possible radio guest in the future. Margot will be on the radio in May to discuss Trash Fest.
- o Meeting days have been changed to the first Tuesday of every month.

MEETING ADJOURNED 8:12 p.m.

(Minutes prepared by Kristen Faughnan.)