

Waste Panel Meeting #8

3.03.2021

Attendees

Chair (present):

- Martin Brand, Deputy Commissioner, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Members present:

- Bernadette Kelly, International Representative & Recording Secretary Teamsters Local 210
- Brigitte Vicenty, Founder, Inner City Green Team
- Dan Egan, Executive Director, Feeding New York State
- Dereth Glance, Executive Director, Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency
- Jane Atkinson Gajwani, Director, Energy and Resource Recovery Programs, NYC Department of Environmental Protection
- John W. Casella, Chairman, CEO, and Secretary, Casella Waste Systems
- Lauren Toretta, President, CH4 Biogas
- Michael Cahill, Partner, Germano & Cahill, P.C.
- Resa Dimino, Senior Consultant, Resource Recycling Systems
- Tok Michelle Oyewole, PhD., Policy and Comms Organizer, NYC Environmental Justice Alliance
- Eric Goldstein, Sr. Attorney and New York City Environment Director, Natural Resources Defense Council

Members not present:

- Allen Hershkowitz, Founding Director and Chairman of the Board, Sport & Sustainability International
- George Bevington, Senior Project Manager, Barton & Loguidice
- Paul Gilman, Senior Vice President and Chief Sustainability Officer, Covanta
- Steve Changaris, Vice President, Northeast Region, National Waste and Recycling Association

Key staff present:

- Sally Rowland, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- Molly Trembley, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Welcome

Martin Brand gives welcoming remarks and provides an overview of the meeting agenda. He explains that recommendations are still being worked on and thanks all attendees for joining. He also shares some updates:

- Today's meeting, we will be presenting some summary placeholder slides to give everyone a basic understanding of the full recommendations slide deck being developed.
- During today's meeting, the group will allow for at least a half hour presentation/discussion for the Landfill and Local-scale diversion subgroups, since they were cut short last meeting. The remainder of meeting time will be used for the other subpanel groups to provide updates, before transitioning to an hour of open discussion if needed.

- March 19th formal recommendations are due. This will be the groups last regular scheduled meeting before mid-April presentations of recommendations to the Climate Action Council. Molly, Sally, and others will work to blend recommendations from all the subpanel groups together into a concise group of final recommendations for the CAC. This recommendation finalization process will include further efforts between smaller group meetings with individuals across subpanel groups.
- There will be additional presentations to the CAC in May, then the Council will use the recommendations to make final decisions on a path forward.

Agenda items for today's discussion:

- Panel discussion on subgroup recommendations:
 - Landfills
 - Local-scale diversion
 - Materials Management (High-level updates)
 - WRRFs (High-level updates)

[Updates from Subpanels](#)

Below are the notes for each subpanel update given during the meeting. Some of these updates led to broader discussions, which are summarized within the subpanel updates.

Landfills Subpanels – Lauren Toretta and Dereth Glance

- Lauren: What we have discussed within our group and incorporated into our recommendations is much larger in scope than just Landfills. Our sub-panel should likely be Landfills and Waste Infrastructure to be more aligned with the recommendations we are proposing.
- Dereth: Presentation of “Landfills Subgroup” slides
 - Landfills Subgroup Slide 1 Dareth’s Overview: Chinese National Sword policy has impacted the U.S. recyclables market significantly. We need to ensure the recyclable/reusable materials are still used despite market shifts, and a key need is to keep the materials moving and out of landfills. Dareth touched on opportunities in recyclables, composting, construction/deconstruction debris, solid waste infrastructure investments and co-location of this infrastructure and the Landfill subpanel’s associated recommendations. Dareth also mentioned opportunities for market expansion for energy generation from local waste and the associated emissions, microgrids, automation, low-emissions waste transportation vehicles, and public outreach/education.
 - Martin Brand: These ideas cross-over significantly with other subpanels. Great to have multiple eyes on these things to capture most comprehensive recommendations.
 - Lauren: Microgrid infrastructure and upgrades can also facilitate local resiliency and self-reliance. Leveraging waste resources can help communities and provide local/self-sustaining energy alternatives, while also serving as a mitigation strategy.
- Resa: I’m curious about the distributed energy recommendation the Landfill Subpanel is making and if this would include recommending new waste disposal facilities or just maximizing efficiency upgrades for current waste disposal facilities in New York?
 - Lauren: It would be dependent upon what opportunities are available at the local community level, could be a mixture of these two options on a community-by-community basis. Need a lot of different technologies in place, so we couldn’t make a clear recommendation for all new technology or only maximizing efficiencies of old

technology and understand that different communities are at different stages in their current waste disposal system's lifecycle.

- Dereth: We don't want to choose the technologies for these recommendations or for individual communities, but we know we will need things like anaerobic digestion for example.
- Resa: I think pursuing this approach with recommendations for possibly building new anaerobic digestion makes sense, but I feel strongly that no recommendations should suggest that new landfills and other waste disposal capacity should be built as that will just prolong the issues we see today.
- Dereth: We must also consider that there could be an unintended consequence of completely neglecting the fact that some new waste disposal capacity is needed in New York already. An example would be the need to keep driving waste further from the source if we don't acknowledge new waste disposal capacity will be needed as other capacity comes offline.
- Resa: Reiterated original point. Need to focus on local recycling, composting, and other methods of maximizing efficiencies of waste disposal, not anything that recommends new waste disposal capacity being built.
- Eric Goldstein: Resa took the words out of my mouth. Saying "low emissions" could mean different things to different people. Don't want to encourage new landfills or incinerators accidentally due to a loose interpretation of the State's goals.
- Lauren Landfills Subpanel Slide 2 Overview on identifying, monitoring, and reducing methane leaks.
- Michael Cahill Landfills Subpanel Slide 3 Overview: Recommendation to help stimulate investment of private capital into building new waste disposal/GHG mitigation infrastructure and highlighting the need to enhance existing waste management systems/infrastructure. We are dealing with 18 million tons of waste in New York annually, more than half of this waste is methane producing waste. Landfilling/exporting two-third of all this waste. Focus should be on reducing organics and methane emissions.
 - The Landfill subpanel's proposal is to create a new revenue source for operation of waste management systems. Recommending at least a \$0.10/kWh or equivalent operating revenue for RNG and non-energy producing compost facilities. This will help retire the export of solid waste, reduce methane emissions, and bring in private investment.
- Martin: Mike, when you say infrastructure upgrades, are you talking about gas capture primarily?
 - At landfills we can monitor, capture, and turn methane into electricity more effectively than what is currently being done. Supplying an incentive like the one we recommend here would bring enough money in to the market to significantly reduce the amount of methane that is currently allowed to escape into the atmosphere. The entire waste disposal process would benefit from the incentive due to increased efficiencies it would create throughout the entire system.
- Martin: Gareth what did you envision when mentioning the low-carbon vehicle transition on Slide one of your presentation?
 - Gareth: Our subpanel was considering any more efficient low-carbon vehicle alternative as long as the technology meets low emissions standards in New York. Anything that complies with New York's low emissions standards would be better in terms of emissions than the current waste collection vehicles used. Co-location and the ability to

fuel waste collection vehicle fleets from Anaerobic digestors, etc., at a single site could be very beneficial/efficient to integrate into the waste collection process as well.

- Resa: If your aim is to capture methane from organics, then I think the recommendation/incentive as currently described on Slide 3 will not be effective. I think it would make more sense if we recommended providing an incentive for anaerobic digestion technologies, but essentially incentivizing sending waste to a landfill for methane gas collection, which is notably inefficient, is not the best way to approach this issue.
 - Lauren: We are in support of materials diversion and the other measures you note, but there are organic materials that are not food waste that must also be handled. We do not want to be at odds with the organic diversion group.
 - Resa: I disagree with providing an incentive for methane capture at landfills. Its already difficult for organics recovery and recycling to compete with waste disposal, so further incentivizing waste disposal to further drive down the costs won't be beneficial. This will only serve to make recycling, composting, and other better strategies less cost-effective in comparison.
 - Eric: Sounds like there is more agreement than is coming across. We just need to have strategies along the whole process, each with specific methane reduction strategies. However, our recommendations ought to incentivize the best strategies for methane reduction as there is very limited funding.
 - Martin: this incentive idea has come up on other panels as well, and we should have a discussion with those folks to see if the strategy can be integrated into a single recommendation.
- Jane: These Landfill Subpanel strategies as written are very consistent with what the Water Resource Recovery Facilities Subgroup has been discussing. Having an incentive to boost private equity would be terrific.
- Dereth: We need the waste lifecycle tools to ensure we have the right information and people in place to provide the best solutions.

Local Scale Diversion & Climate Justice Subgroup – Brigitte Vicenty and Tok Michelle Oyewole, PhD.

- Brigitte led a presentation of Local Scale Diversion & Climate Justice Slides and potential strategies
 - Martin: The key is identifying successful models we are familiar with, then articulating a way local models can be extended so they are adaptable for communities throughout the state. Will need to figure out a way to attribute methane emissions to these strategies in some way, though it may be more qualitative than quantitative.
- Tok provided an extended presentation of Local Scale Diversion & Climate Justice Slides (Cont), which were included in a separate slide deck.
 - Tok: We focus a lot on landfill emissions, but there are so many other aspects of GHG reductions that we need to consider as well.
 - Another Recommendation our group intends to include, but is not currently shown on these slides, is ensuring new facilities and buildings in environmental justice communities are built to certain standards to reduce GHG and other forms of pollution like noise.
- Martin: What has been your experience from local government side of composting organics in an urban environment with little available space. What is the practicality of proposing a new composting facility for example?

- Tok: New York has a lot of land, which could be used for these facilities. Also not opposed to other methods and strategies for reducing or shrinking the volume of organic waste produced. There are other regulatory hurdles that would need to be overcome.
- Martin: you mention efficient transport routes through communities, who would do that? Would these types of changes need to be made through local zoning/traffic policy, usually a local issue?
 - Tok: This was in context of food delivery as well as waste disposal. We acknowledge this process would need to be done with community input.
- Martin: You also mention adaptation, resilience, and flooding at the facility level, which was a good point and integrates well with other subpanels.
- Jane: How did you come up with the composting figures and was there thought for how composting technologies would integrate with anaerobic digesting?
 - Tok: they were selected just to make sure composting is incentivized adequately.

Materials Management Subpanel – Resa Dimino

- Martin just wants to highlight anything new since last meeting
- Resa: Speaking to the Materials Management Subpanel Slides and providing a high-level overview
 - Went through notes from organics work group and picked up a few recommendations from that, which should be represented by our group's recommendations.
 - All new updates to our recommendations planned at this time will go under the first bullet on slide 1 of our slides regarding food scrap recycling.

Water Resource Recovery Facilities Subpanel – Jane Gajwani

- Martin just wants to highlight anything new since last meeting
- Jane: speaking to Water Resource Recovery Facilities Subpanel slides and providing a high-level overview
 - Our group is going to roll back into strategies that focus on transforming wastewater, as our subpanels was going down a path previously that diverted from their overall goals for the recommendations.
- Martin: in terms of water emissions, what's the impact on the overall water emissions if a number of these recommendations were implemented? Would this increase or decrease water flow/nutrient discharge?
 - Jane: If we took a lot of high protein food waste for example, this would increase nitrogen levels. Our strategies cannot disrupt ecosystems impacted by discharge and would need to monitor the impact of all changes closely.
- Jane: Septic is a very small subset of the issue, but the systems do produce a lot of methane and there are strategies besides centralization (like we touched on last week) that can go a long way in reducing methane emissions.
 - Martin: There is a rural project in the Catskills for protecting the watershed that touches on this issue.
 - Eric: It is a very effective program when it is adequately funded.
- Jane: Our group is also looking into pharma and medical waste disposal accessibility.

Open Discussion

- Bernadette: What's the discussion around stabilizing the commodities market and enhancing recycling markets in New York and what recycling facility technologies are out there to reduce the labor needed to operate these facilities?
 - Resa: Recycling markets are improving, even significantly in the last year. There is a limited amount the State can do about the commodities that come out of the recycling facilities. Recycling markets need to remove the volatility from the market for producers.
 - Resa: There's also been a lot of automation and optical sorting technology rolled out, as there is a labor shortage for jobs like this in the country as a whole. Nationally, automation allows for labor in the plant to do higher quality things, and less human sorting labor that is hard to maintain. Human labor is usually better at sorting than the robots but would need to do a needs assessment for the state and come out with a New York specific plan first.
 - Bernadette: Is the Bottle Bill from Kaminsky part of this?
 - Resa: no, it is separate.

Meeting Wrap-Up

- Martin: We have a couple weeks left to finalize and harmonize our recommendations. We will continue to have meetings across individuals and working groups to keep honing and refining recommendations down by March 19th. If there are areas of dispute, we can work to find a common ground that all are comfortable putting forward as recommendations for the CAC.
- Martin: Meeting close-out