

JEFFERSON COUNTY
Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC)

Minutes

Special Meeting, Thursday, June 08, 2023, 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Public Works Office, 623 Sheridan St., Port Townsend, WA

Hybrid Meeting

Audio and video recordings posted under Meeting Recordings on this website
<https://www.co.jefferson.wa.us/483/Solid-Waste-Advisory-Committee>

Opening Business

Meeting agenda posted on website on June 6, 2023.

Call to Order and Roll Call – Lisa Crosby, *Chair*

Committee Members Present:

Heidi Eisenhour, *County Commissioner*
Tracy Grisman, *Vice-Chair & District #1*
Joey Deese, *Waste Connections*

Lisa Crosby, *Chair & District #1*
Glenn Gately, *Conservation District*
Bliss Morris, *City of Port Townsend*

Bart Kale, *Citizen at Large Joined meeting at 3:44*

Committee Members Absent

Alysa Thomas, *Skookum*

Tim Deverin, *District #3*

Staff Present

Al Cairns, *Solid Waste Manager*
Monte Reinders, *Public Works Director*
Chris Spall, *Public Works Support Staff*
Laura Tucker, *Public Health*

Guests/Visitors: None

There is a quorum.

Public Comment: Al received public comment by email from Tom Thiersch. Al read the email and opened the attachment, “Role, Responsibilities, and Relationships of the Local Solid Waste Advisory Committee,” for viewing on his screen.

Discussion and recommendation from SWAC to BoCC regarding Public Works recommended solid waste fee revisions

Lisa asked what Heidi thinks the BoCC is hoping will come from this special meeting of the SWAC. Heidi said the Commissioners want SWACs input and guidance as to the direction the BoCC should take on the proposed fee schedule. Other Jefferson County advisory committees provide input to the BoCC on scheduled fee changes, so this is not unique. Lisa feels the SWAC can provide opinions when they are well informed. She asked how SWAC members would like to communicate any opinions or votes about this with the BoCC. Lisa said it’s important to make sure the SWAC knows what they are recommending or speaking about. Al opened the Draft of the Resolution for the fee revisions that was presented to the BoCC in a workshop on June 5, 2023. Lisa proposed going through the items, allowing SWAC members time to ask questions as needed, and then asking the SWAC if they feel they have the information needed to make an informed recommendation and what that recommendation might be.

The following items were presented. Al provided a short explanation on each, and SWAC members asked questions and discussed the item. Lisa then polled the SWAC members for their recommendation as to being for, against, or abstaining on giving an opinion on the item. Heidi pointed out that she is non-voting member of the SWAC and therefore would not vote. Bart voted after joining the meeting late.

Transfer Station Fee Schedule

- Adjust capital fund balance from 12% to 25% of current capital replacement value

Al explained that this means increasing the fund balance from 12% to 25% to reduce the amount that will need to be financed for a new facility. The 25% fund balance could likely be achieved in the next 5 years with a 2.5% increase to the tonnage rate per year based on 2022 tonnages.

FOR: 4; AGAINST: 0; ABSTAIN: 2. Those abstaining said that in principle they support it and have confidence in the SW staff's work, but don't have the expertise to vote on a specific dollar amount.

- Adjust operation reserve fund balance (used for operations and maintenance) from 15% to 25% of projected annual expenditures.

Al said the reason for the increase is that the reserve is too low and should be three months of operating reserves. Probably get to this benchmark in a year or two.

FOR: 4; AGAINST: 0; ABSTAIN: 2;

- Adjust per ton fee for municipal solid waste by 2.5% annually until fund balances meet benchmarks.

Al said the fee increase is to achieve the benchmarks discussed in the previous two items. Currently the tonnage rate is \$163 and increase each year by 2.5% until the benchmark met. Lisa asked what the tonnage rate would get to in 5 years. Lisa feels it's a little open ended and would be likely to abstain because she does not have enough information and in principle supports raising the fee but doesn't know by how much.

FOR: 4; AGAINST: 0; ABSTAIN: 2

- Adjust minimum fee for municipal solid waste from \$10.00 to \$20.00 and the minimum fee weight from 120 lbs. to 240 lbs.

Al referred to this as a scale transit fee and said it recognizes that no matter the load, when you enter the facility, a cost is incurred. Tracy asked if that could be negotiated. She feels it's like people would be getting penalized for having less garbage. Tracy has a lot of questions about this. Lisa also has questions about this. Could this be withdrawn from the resolution? Heidi said a vote would be useful for commissioners to know where SWAC stands on this. Glen said purpose of raising minimum it to prevent long lines, and asked if by doing this the days of operation could increase to six. Al said no, but the operational hours lost from the Monday closure could be regained by opening earlier on the current days the facility is open to the public. The goal is to increase the hours of operation starting in Fall of 2023 when three new staff people have gained enough experience.

FOR: 3; AGAINST: 0; ABSTAIN: 3; Those abstaining requested that the statement be included in the minutes with the poll on this item:

The SWAC agrees that the Solid Waste facility is operating over-capacity and that long lines are a stress for both customers and workers.

The SWAC would like to support Public Works in finding a solution to this problem.

The SWAC agrees that one possible solution to the long lines is to raise the minimum fee in order to discourage small loads.

However, there is concern among some SWAC members that not enough is known about the 45% of self-haulers who are minimum fee customers to support the staff recommendation to double the minimum fee and weight. For instance, what percent of these small loads are from residents within the Port Townsend City limits, who have the option of paying for an extra can collection, versus county residents who may be on fixed income, lacking in collection options due to location, and unable for whatever reason to bring in heavier loads? Without more information, a vote in favor of the proposal may do unintended harm. In addition, there is concern among some SWAC members that raising the minimum fee disincentivizes waste reduction by removing a financial incentive to generate less waste.

There may be other possible ways to reduce the long lines at the transfer station and the SWAC is open to discussing this with staff at our regular SWAC meetings. One such possibility would be to install a webcam so that customers could see the line length. Another possible solution could be to communicate with the public, especially those within the City limits, of the need to reduce small loads.

- Adjust non-disposal fee from \$5.66 to whatever minimum fee is determined by BoCC.

Al said this is when someone gets a weight by going on the scale. Shold has commercial scales and so does Shine Quarry, both are more expensive than what is charged at the Transfer Station. A low percentage of customers do this, but it takes up time, increases the line at the Transfer Station and does not contribute to the revenue. Set the charge for this to be whatever minimum fee is for garbage. Bart feels purpose of SWAC is to vote on principles, not on specific rates. He supports this fee increase because it enforces the principle that folks should go elsewhere to have this done because it takes away from the core purpose of the facility.

FOR 6; AGAINST: 0; ABSTAIN: 0

Quilcene Rural Drop Box Fee Schedule

- Establish a minimum fee of \$15.00 for up to two 32-gallon cans.

The increase is consistent with philosophy of discouraging small loads. Would not affect a lot of customers in Quilcene because most bring in large loads. Current rate is \$6.32 for a single can. While long lines are not a problem there, raising the fee is consistent with the minimum fee increase at the Transfer Station. The message is that facilities are costly to operate and we want to encourage more curbside service and make that more cost effective. How many people have the option of curbside service? Waste Connections offers curbside service throughout the county and pack out service for disabled customers. Rates are the same in the County whether in Port Hadlock, Port Ludlow, or Quilcene.

FOR: 4; AGAINST: 0; ABSTAIN: 2

Low income customer discount

SWAC is open to exploring a low-income customer discount program. Al said County staff anticipate being able to start that program with the roll-out of a new fee schedule. Work to do with King County, Public Works Finance team, the State Auditor, and OlyCap to get guidance on how to do this. Al said staff are earnestly pursuing this. Would be the second county in the state to offer this after King County.

FOR: 6; AGAINST: 0; ABSTAIN: 0

Regional Direct Fee

Al said this is a way to manage disposal from very large construction projects without overwhelming capacity at the Transfer Station. The formula developed is based on King County's regional direct fee. The County will be discussing this with representatives from the City of Port Townsend and Waste Connections to make sure what is being proposed works for them. The formula essentially takes the operating cost out of the per ton rate. The proposed fee would be \$68.43 per ton. Lisa asked why are we charging a fee if it is not going to the Transfer Station. Often called a host fee, the host county's facility serves as an insurance for the community at large. The fee would help support our Solid Waste operations and programs. All garbage generated in Jefferson County is supposed to go to the Transfer Station. The fee still supports our capital and program costs, but allows the material to go straight to the landfill so it does not overwhelm the Transfer Station. This formula was developed in anticipation of a large construction project being done at the hospital, which is expected to generate 320 tons of garbage in a short amount of time. The \$68.43 is an example rate based on the formula.

FOR: 6; AGAINST: 0; ABSTAIN: 0. SWAC would like it noted that a vote for this is in principle for a regional direct fee, and not for a specific fee. Lisa asked why the County is taking a fee for this? Monte explained that programs like recycling and household hazardous waste collection are funded by the tipping fee.

Meeting adjourned at 4:44 PM

Next Meeting Date: July 27.

2023 Regular Meetings

January 26
March 23
May 25
July 27
September 28
December 7