

State of Connecticut  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE  
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 3900  
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Solid Waste Management Working Group

Meeting Minutes

August 17, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 1:07 p.m. by Chairman Norm Needleman

The following committee members were present:

Katie Dykes, Rebecca Augur, Marissa Paslick Gillett, Sen. Christine Cohen, Rep. Joseph Gresko, Sen. Normal Needleman, Rep. Raghieb Alli-Brennan, Sen. Paul Formica, Brian Paganini, David Steuber, Donald Stein, Seth Bahler, James Cosgrove, Joan Nicholas, Frank Antonacci, Jason Manafort

Absent were:

Sen. Craig Miner, Rep. Stephen Harding, Rep. Charles Ferraro

Sen. Needleman opened the meeting stating both the Energy & Technology Committee and Environment Committee thought it was important to address the waste issues in a joint effort. A substantial amount of waste is going out of state with the closure of the Materials Innovation and Recycling Authority (MIRA).

Sen. Needleman stated that it was important to revisit long-term plans and understands no one will get everything they want but hopefully come out with a vision for what the future looks like for solid waste management. The goal being to invest in best technologies and reduce waste, divert waste, digest if we can and recycle more.

Rep. Gresko thanked all appointees for stepping up to help address the waste management issue. Rep. Gresko stated that we will have to deal with some diversion, deal with Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and have an understanding of what actually happens to the garbage we put

away. We have an opportunity to take a bold step on some new technology and take care of our own waste in our own backyards.

Sen. Cohen has spent the bulk of her tenure on waste management issues, recognizing there is a crisis when she came into the legislature in major part dealing with the MIRA shutdown and now its official closure. We are seeing extreme backlogs and figuring out how to manage our way through with one of the largest plants in the state to shut down. She stated that are going to be exporting trash to other landfills and other states.

Sen. Cohen expressed gratitude for the appointees of the Solid Waste Management Working Group and others to come to the table to get through the crisis. She recognized the extreme commitment to real solutions whether it be through anerobic digestion, multi-stream recycling, new landfill management and other means. Sen. Cohen asked for all to be open minded throughout the process and think of new ways to come at this with new technologies, for instance, asking what other states are doing and what are other countries are doing. Sen. Cohen stressed working together to benefit the people of Connecticut as well as our businesses across the State of Connecticut.

Rep. Raghib Allie-Brennan mentioned that while he is not an expert on waste management, he looks forward to learning more about how we can help the environment, save taxpayers and create economic benefits in the state. He looks forward to what we can discover in the working group moving forward.

Sen. Needleman added the plan is to break down into subgroups that focus on energy and environment. He acknowledged that not everyone who has an interest in the topic is going to be a member of the working group by appointment. There are people who have experience that we want their input. As an example, first selectman and mayors, town managers throughout the state are invested in what the working group is trying to do.

Commissioner Katie Dykes of DEEP said this is a topic she has ben actively engaged in and acknowledged Sen. Cohen and Rep. Gresko as champions for important legislation in waste management over these last number of years. The working group is a great way to work with legislative leadership in the off session and to help identify potential solutions. Since Gov. Lamont too office it was clear MIRA was struggling. At this juncture, we rely on other communities outside of the state to accept our waste. The hope is that the outcomes for the task force will help make the period-of-time of reliance on out-of-state landfilling as brief as possible. Commissioner Dykes expressed appreciation of legislative support specifically that the legislature has provided \$10 million over two budget cycles and surplus for sustainable materials management grant programs. DEEP is in the process of working with 14 municipalities to help implement pilots supported by the grant. DEEP is also in discussion with some municipalities about regional waste authorities and the extent to which DEEP can provide some technical assistance for municipalities that are interested in working together.

Commissioner Dykes stated that DEEP is hard at work on the bottle bill modernization and pleased to see ERP for gas cylinders move forward. Additionally, DEEP has revamped and

reviewed the Connecticut Coalition for Sustainable Materials Management (CCSMM) which has over 95 municipalities in it today.

Rebecca Augur with the Intergovernmental Policy and Planning Division of OPM attended on behalf of the Secretary of OPM. She stated they are very interested in regional solutions to these issues and is happy to be on the working group.

Marissa Paslick Gillett, Chair of Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) stated she was looking forward to the conversation and happy to contribute in any way she can.

Brian Paganini, Vice President of Quantum Biopower, stated that the company operates an anaerobic digester in southern Connecticut. They are in their fifth year of operations and produce roughly 40,000 tons of food waste separated from grocers, hotels and facilities that make food waste and turn into approximately 400,000 cubic feet of biogas per day. The biogas is renewable and can be used to as fuel to power a combined heat and power system making about a megawatt of electricity power for 700 households here in Connecticut.

Mr. Paganini stated that prior to building the facility, Quantum Biopower spent about three years traveling the world and examining waste systems in other parts of the world, the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Denmark. This helped evaluate what type of technological platform they felt were going to be best for the management of food waste. Mr. Paganini feels he and his organization brings a deep experience to anaerobic digestion and operating waste systems as well as knowledge of other parts of the world's experience as well.

David Steuber, Chief of Staff to Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin, spoke about his background in his position with the mayor and appointment on the Board of Directors with MIRA, the incineration plant that was just closed in Hartford weeks ago. In addition, Mr. Steuber previously served as policy analyst for both the Energy and Environment Committees of the General Assembly. He looks forward to working on these issues presented.

Don Stein, first selectman of Barkhamsted, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate on the working group. He has been on the MIRA board for 12 years and chairman for 11 of those years. He is hopeful the committee will put together a strategic plan that the state can implement to keep the waste from going out of state, optimize the use of solid waste for energy and minimize the amount that is disposed.

Seth Baylor with Oak Ridge Dairy operates a cow dairy farm on several thousand acres of land with 30,000 cows. They are in the process of building a methane digester and hope to have it operational in November of this year. The digester would take cow manure and turn it into renewable natural gas. He's hopeful to provide input on this topic.

James Cosgrove, First Selectman of Branford and member of the Bristol Resource, stated he appreciated the opportunity to participate. The issue of waste management has been a concern of his since first taking office in 2013. He spoke of how this issue is affecting first selectman and mayors across the state. He looks forward to representing municipalities interest as the group develops short term and long-term plans.

Sen. Formica stated he appreciated the opportunity to be on the working group and get all the players around the table to come up with a solution that works once trashed energy plants became less than profitable. Sen. Formica understands we must work relatively quickly in order to get something done in the next few years as infrastructure takes some time once determined to be implemented.

Mark Van Weelden, Covanta, Area Asset Manager for State of Connecticut. Covanta operates a facility in Bristol. From a power standpoint, Mr. Van Weelden stated they are not a big player with 30 megawatt per hour and see more to come in the future.

Joan Nichols, Executive Director of the Connecticut Farm Bureau thanked Sen. Cohen for the appointment. She said she appreciates the legislature working with farmers the last few years to allow a more robust farm and anaerobic digester program. She feels farms could be a part of the solutions and recognized several farms working on anaerobic digesters.

Frank Antonacci, COO at USA Hauling & Recycling, operates many facilities throughout the state that manage waste and process recyclables. He stated the issues addressed need scalable solutions. He's looking forward to working together.

Jason Manafort, owner of CWPM. Mr. Manafort said CWPM is a private waste hauling company here in Connecticut. They service thousands of residential, commercial and municipal customers for waste removal and operate their own facility throughout the state. He looks forward to working with everyone to find solutions for disposal since it's a problem that needs a quick solution.

Sen. Needleman acknowledged that the success of what the state does is based on private industry that service the State of Connecticut and towns. Sen. Needleman discussed his thoughts on quasi public options involved in whether we burn or bury and to move away from shipping out of state.

Sen. Cohen stated that it was not lost on the working group that there are limited appointments laid out in the legislation and recognized there are a myriad of experts of this subject. She hopes others will come to the table even if they are not appointed specifically because there are individuals throughout the state that are experts in recycling and in anaerobic digestion and municipal leaders.

Sen. Cohen said the intention is to have the working group be an open process whereby people can provide input to all, and the legislature can take that under advisement and consideration. She said this meeting and working group is a call to the public to get involved, from taxpayers to specialist in waste management. If there are concerns, the working group would like to know and would like to hear from experts in their fields.

Sen. Needleman agreed and mentioned there will be subgroups in the working group in order work with experts in various fields. Sen. Needleman listed potential subgroups.

Subgroup: Diversion, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Sen. Cohen, Rep. Gresko, Sen. Miner, Rep. Harding, Rep. Allie-Brennan, Commissioner Dykes, Rebecca Augur, James Cosgrove, Joan Nichols, Seth Bahler, Brian Paganini

Subgroup: Combustion, Gasification, Pyrolization, Landfill, Gas Recovery and Facility Location

Rep. Gresko, Sen. Formica, Don Stein, David Steuber, Frank Antonacci, Jason Manafort, Mark van Weelden, Brian Paganini. Other people have stepped forward who have a lot of experience – Anthony Farina and Jeff Martirano

Subgroup: Energy Recovery

Commissioner Dykes, Chairperson Paslick Gillett, Sen. Needleman, Sen. Formica, Rep. Ferraro and Dave Steuber.

There was discussion over the outcome of the working groups to have recommendations for agencies, towns and the legislature for the upcoming year.

There was discussion regarding the rules for notification for subgroups. The LCO attorney will review notification procedures and get back to the chairs.

Meeting was adjourned at 1:53 p.m.