

Meeting: Regional Waste Advisory Committee (RWAC) Meeting  
Date: Thursday, November 16, 2023  
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.  
Place: Zoom meeting  
Purpose: *The purpose of the Regional Waste Advisory Committee is to provide input on certain policies, programs, and projects that implement actions in the 2030 Regional Waste Plan, as well as to provide input on certain legislative and administrative actions that the Metro Council or Chief Operating Officer will consider related to implementation of the 2030 Regional Waste Plan.*

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**Members in Attendance:**

Marta McGuire, Metro  
Alondra Flores-Aviña, Trash for Peace  
Sharetta Butcher, North by Northeast Community Health Center (NxNE)  
Jackie Kirouac-Fram, Rebuilding Center  
Teresa Gaddy  
Kathy Folsom, Washington County  
Lindsay Marshall, City of Tualatin  
Christa McDermott, Community Environmental Services, PSU  
Audrey O'Brien, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)  
Eben Polk, City of Portland  
Beth Vargas Duncan, Oregon Refuse and Recycling Association (ORRA)  
Ryan Largura, City of Troutdale  
Andrew Bartlett, City of Hillsboro

**1. CALL TO ORDER & MEETING OVERVIEW**

Marta McGuire (Metro) brought the virtual meeting to order at 8:31 am and previewed the agenda. Marta introduced new members Teresa Gaddy.

**2. Working Agreements**

Marta shared that the committee was reimagined with the development of the 2030 Regional Waste Plan and working agreements were established for the committee. They are being revisited because the committee has brought on new members. Marta introduced Rob Nathan to facilitate the discussion for the working agreements.

*Member Discussion:*

Christa McDermott, PSU, stated that the agreements were developed pre-zoom. It would be helpful to have Zoom relevant guidelines. Additions include not using the chat and keeping cameras on.

Eben Polk, City of Portland, asked if any RWAC meetings have been held in person? Ms. McGuire replied that two polls have been conducted where the committee preferred to meet in a virtual format because of time and space constraints but we can conduct another poll.

Beth Vargas Duncan, ORRA, did not remember agreeing to not use chat for the meetings and often does to provide clarity on her comments and save time. She requested clarity so she can be respectful. Ms. McGuire replied that the chat is not open to all webinar attendees, only panelists, but that Beth is welcome to use the chat function.

Andrew Bartlett, City of Hillsboro, shared that supports keeping the camera on for the meetings, but would like to be able to turn off cameras during presentations for better viewing.

Ms. Vargas Duncan felt that Metro Staff have been very proactive in keeping the committee updated. She would like staff to provide PowerPoints one week in advance, and that Metro Council receive their powerpoints one week in advance. Ms. McGuire replied that meeting materials can be provided one week in advance, but we cannot always guarantee providing PowerPoint that far in advance as staff are often working on them up to the day before meetings. Metro Council received their powerpoint slides 24 hours in advance of meetings.

Audrey O'Brien, DEQ, shared that she appreciates that Metro asks for community input prior to government and industry members and encourages the continuation of this practice.

Mr. Polk asked if the meeting materials and slides are posted to the RWAC webpage? Marta confirmed that they were.

Kathy Folsom, Washington County, asked how it would be decided when the committee would be voting versus providing feedback. She advocates for voting when items go to Council when an action is required. Ms. McGuire replied that the committee should decide this answer together.

Ms. Vargas Duncan shared that this committee hadn't used the red, yellow, green voting system and questioned if it is the best mechanism. Ms. McGuire replied that the group could do thumbs up, thumbs down.

Sharetta Butcher, NxNE, added that the committee stopped using the red, yellow green method because of COVID-19 but thought it was really good when it was used, and if there was a way to modify for Zoom meetings.

Mr. Polk was curious of Metro staff would support a structured way of taking input on committee members experience while serving on RWAC. Ms. McGuire clarified that he meant all RWAC members. Each year the community members participate in a lookback and look ahead meeting that we could bring to all committee members.

### **3. Rate Transparency**

Marta introduced Holly Stirnkorb from Metro.

#### *Key points of the presentation included:*

The presentation is an update on the Council engagement outcome which sought guidance on proceeding with a resolution to conduct a cost-of-service study of private transfer stations. The study aims to ensure transparency in rates for the region's private transfer stations. If Council wishes to continue toward a cost-of-service study, Metro staff would convene industry, local government, and community with an independent third-party expert to develop the cost-of-service study design. The result of this project is that Council will be provided with a report of findings which will include an aggregated cost per ton for wet waste transfer at privately owned transfer stations in the region. The information will provide cost-based data to help local governments set collection rates. Local governments conduct detailed rate reviews to set collection rates and can verify costs provided by franchised haulers – except rates charged for disposal/wet waste transfer by private transfer stations. In general, Local government and community members are supportive of proceeding with cost-of-service study to improve transparency and help ensure equity for rate payers. Industry representatives expressed concerns about confidentiality of sensitive business information. Industry shared information about why costs at private transfer station may differ from Metro's fee, the impact of tonnage allocations on rates, and how matching Metro's fee affects the rate of return and the ability to invest in facility improvements.

This guidance was shared with Council at engagements on Oct 16 and Nov 7. Council directed staff to: Revise the draft resolution to further clarify the process to design and conduct cost-of-service study. Provide a summary of current practices to conduct cost-of-service studies including local government annual rate review processes. Return to Council with updated information and consideration of resolution.

*Member Discussion:*

Ms. Vargas Duncan clarified that this study would not look at self-haul services. She is asking why costs are not being considered for singular costs at Metro Central and Metro South. Ms. Stirnkorb replied that Metro is committed to continued transparency for its transfer stations and that this study is focused on private stations because some local governments cannot use Metro Transfer stations due to geography. If the private rates are higher it has an impact on the communities being served.

Ms. Folsom replied that Washington County uses actual disposal costs from private transfer stations to set their rate. They do not project future costs. They cannot check the data so must pass these costs directly through to communities.

Ryan Largura, City of Troutdale, asked what are the next steps in this process? In addition what would be the next steps for the tonnage allocation program? Ms. McGuire replied that Council directed staff to revise the draft resolution to be presented for decision in the future. The tonnage allocation program will be evaluated spring of 2024.

Mr. Largura asked what happens if Council does not pass the resolution. Ms. McGuire replied that we would continue business as is.

Alondra Flores Avina, Trash for Peace, asked what the current methods or tools that are being used for private stations to be transparent with the public. Ms. Stirnkorb replied that there are no tools to look at the costs charged by private stations.

Ms. Flores Avina asked for more details on how private stations rate of return is impacted based on Metro's tonnage allocations, and their ability to invest in their facilities. Ms. Stirnkorb describe how Metro allocates tonnage which is connected to the money they can earn.

Mr. Bartlett shared that Hillsboro does not always receive notices when rates increase from private transfer stations. Having the Metro rate is a proxy scale for Hillsboro to create rate projections.

Mr. Polk, shared that Portland benchmarks to Metro when setting their rates but sees value in this project.

Mr. Largura wanted to clarify that he hears that it is difficult to use Metro's rates as a benchmark while comparing Metro and private stations because they are "apples and oranges" which becomes very frustrating.

Mr. Vargas Duncan replied that private transfer stations are very different than Metro's transfer stations. Regarding the rate of return, private stations have many costs such as property taxes that Metro's stations do not have. Private transfer stations are engaged through ORRA and want to help with public understanding.

Ms. O'Brien shared that it seems Metro has clearly explained how it sets its rates, and that this rate transparency project addresses additional goals in the regional waste plan. Rate

transparency should not be looking at rate transparency independent of all the other interrelated actions in the regional waste plan.

#### **4. Budget Development**

Marta McGuire presented on Budget Development.

*Key points of the presentation included:*

Marta presented on the Budget Development. She reviewed Metro's budget process and Waste Prevention and Environmental Services budget for 2023-2024.

*Member Discussion:*

Mr. Bartlett asked when Metro Council exceeded the fee ceiling and moved closer to the cost of service? Ms. McGuire did confirm that Council adjusted their direction on fees moving closer to the cost of service. The fee increase was close to 11%. WPES anticipates building a budget based on the 11% increase.

Ms. Flores Avina asked if local governments and community-based organizations would be able to provide feedback on the regional waste refund becoming a long term program. Ms. McGuire clarified that this has already been approved and is part of the current budget. To provide input on the budget by testifying at Metro Council when they discuss the budget. WPES is hosting budget roundtables with local governments, industry and nonprofits as well as engaging with this committee.

Mr. Largura asked if Metro is starting to work towards a cost of service for its budget, he doesn't see how we can build facilities if the budget is not full paying for cost of service as of right now. He also asked what capacity already exists for reuse in the system? Can the budget support this effort more? It would also be helpful to be able to see where communities are receiving services based on regional system fee funds on a map. Ms. McGuire replied that we could work to accommodate this request.

Ms. Folsom shared that Washington county continues to see a large gap in hazardous waste services and wants this to be included in the budget for next year.

Jackie Kirouac-Fram, Rebuilding Center, asked for information about a potential reuse fee. Ms. McGuire replied that this was posed as a concept in the system facilities plan. More information can be brought about this concept.

Mr. Polk shared that local governments have a desire to receive a larger share of the regional system fee.

#### **5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

There were no public comments.

#### **Final Remarks**

Approval of the October meeting minutes was moved to the December meeting.

**MEETING ADJOURNED at 10:30 a.m.**