

EAC votes to promote recycling

By Carrie Ann Knauer
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Wednesday, September 12, 2007

The Carroll County Environmental Advisory Council, charged with the task of reviewing solid waste management strategies, has started drafting a new framework of managing waste and a plan that does not include a waste-to-energy incinerator.

After months of listening to presentations on different solid waste management system alternatives, members of the EAC started discussing concrete recommendations to make to the Carroll County Board of Commissioners at Tuesday's council meeting.

The six members of the nine-member board who were present voted unanimously to recommend the commissioners adopt a paradigm shift in the county from the old style of "solid waste management" to a new method of "resource management," which emphasized waste reduction, reuse and recycling at the household and business level, before materials end up in the county's hands.

A separate motion was passed to make recycling the driving element of the county's resource management strategy by setting up a system that allows the county to manage the waste stream by increasing funds for public education of recycling efforts and by phasing in mandatory recycling of specific commodities.

Council member Kim Petry said the county's 10-Year Solid Waste Management Plan outlines "reduce, reuse, recycle" as its top three priorities in waste management. She said the new recommendations are in line with the county's existing philosophy.

Council member David Pyatt said he agreed but thought it could be a hard sell for some.

"I agree recycling is definitely the way to go," Pyatt said. "Recycle until it hurts."

The council voted to recommend the commissioners take legislative steps to allow the county to better manage the waste stream, particularly through switching to a franchise system of waste collection that requires all county-produced waste be brought to a county resource management facility. The council also agreed that the county should work with the haulers cooperatively to develop a framework for a new system, one that would favor local businesses when possible.

Having public participation in a better and more comprehensive recycling system is crucial, which would make public education programs essential, said council member Sher Horosko. Horosko said the current budget of the county recycling office is about \$225,000, whereas early estimates for a waste-to-energy incinerator were at least \$200 million. If the county is serious about recycling, it needs to fund the program and the public education component, she said.

After establishing recycling as the new center of the county's solid waste management plan, the council discussed waste-to-energy incinerators. Though the council heard presentations about the technology from the Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority, which handled the county's request for proposals for an incinerator, and from a Montgomery County public works representative about the system that county has in place, Horosko said she does not believe a waste-to-energy facility is compatible with a waste management system centered on recycling.

The council passed a recommendation that the county commissioners not support the planning or construction of a waste-to-energy facility at this time, but rather direct its efforts toward a resource management strategy for at least five years to determine the success of newly instituted efforts designed to reduce waste, recover resources and generate revenue from commodity markets.

Pyatt said he was afraid that with Frederick County's apparent interest in proceeding with plans for a waste-to-energy facility, Carroll might be pressured to go along with the jointly operated facility to be shared with Frederick because it would be less costly than each county building its own facility.

Horosko noted that former presenter Neil Seldman said in his presentation to the council that Carroll County is not in a high-pressure situation where it needs to make a drastic decision immediately. According to the county's solid waste management plan, the county has landfill space to service the county through 2016, and the county should not rush a decision on a costly investment, she said.

Council member Jim Johnson said he had gotten a bad vibe from the Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority, and thought the county needed more independent research on waste-to-energy incinerators before making a decision anyway.

"They make it a very fluid process if you go in the direction they want you to go," Johnson said of the authority.

The council did not get to review the remaining five recommendations that were prepared before the council meeting, and is planning to continue the discussion at the October council meeting. County liaison to the EAC Cindy Parr said that should leave enough time for the council to send its recommendations to the department of public works and the commissioners before they have their serious discussions comparing solid waste alternatives.

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