Comox Strathcona Waste Management

Minutes

REGIONAL SOLID WASTE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes from the meeting held on October 24, 2023 via Zoom commencing at 10:32 am

PRESENT:

W. Cole-Hamilton	Co-Chair, RSWAC
D. Baar	Campbell River
D. Birtch	Campbell River
M. E. Walling	Campbell River
W. Semmelink	Comox
R. Rowe	CVRD Area B
K. Stubblefield	CVRD Area C
M. Stewart	SRD Area D
K. Lukinuk	Hornby Island
K. Hamilton	Tavola Group
L. Eason, CSWM Community Educator	Consultant
M. Tatchell, Chief Administrative Officer	Village of Tahsis
C. Thompson	City of Courtenay
C. Perry, Manager of Public Works	Town of Comox
R. Crisfield, Manager of Operations	Village of Cumberland
S. Fisher, Engineering Services Coordinator	Strathcona Regional District
A. Milwid, First Nations Liaison	Strathcona Regional District
M. Rutten, General Manager of Engineering Services	CVRD
V. Schau, Senior Manager of CSWM Services	CVRD
S. Willie, Manager of Solid Waste Planning & Policy Development	CVRD
K. Douville, Manager of Financial Planning	CVRD
M. Briggs, Branch Assistant – Engineering Services	CVRD

ITEMS:

S. Willie requested that the advisory committee please ensure all communications are sent to the CSWM email due to staff turnover.

Review of Agenda and Minutes

Co-Chair W. Cole-Hamilton acknowledged that the meeting is being hosted on the traditional unceded territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, and the Comox Strathcona Waste Management (CSWM) service area is located in the Coast Salish, Kwakwaka'wakw, and Nuu-chah-nulth territories.

The committee reviewed the minutes of the September 19, 2023 Regional Solid Waste Advisory Committee (RSWAC) meeting and no errors or omissions were noted. The advisory committee adopted the October 24, 2023 meeting agenda.

R. Crisfield and M. Stewart joined the meeting at 10:39 am.

Step 2 Consultation "What We Heard" Report Presentation

K. Hamilton gave an overview of the consultation process. Staff are seeking advisory committee feedback on the consultation report by November 3. Provided a brief overview of the communications and consultation objectives, which include increasing understanding of solid waste management,

making solid waste management understandable and accessible, engaging a broad and diverse range of residents and stakeholders, and meeting or exceeding legislative requirement for public consultation. The three key topics include the role of the Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) and the importance of managing waste effectively, opportunities and challenges of existing system and future needs, and guiding principles and goals for a new SWMP. CSWM has been raising awareness through multiple medias (digital, hardcopy, in-person) and methods (website, newsletters, posters, etc.). Over 3,000 people participated in the consultation process.

Overall themes of the input received included:

- Support for draft guiding principles and goals. Received feedback recommending that simplified language be used.
- Education is key to behavior change. Request for additional information, including for existing services. Suggestions for school programs, social media campaigns, landfill tours, etc.
- Producers of packaging and single-use products should take greater responsibility. May be beyond scope of SWMP, but still desire for greater responsibility from producers.
- Costs and value for money, and better understanding of how service is funded. Some residents feel they are paying twice through taxes and user fees, and rural communities feel they are receiving less value for the services than provided in municipalities.
- Recycling should be easy. Service should be equitable across service area and more accessible.
- Different communities have different needs. Split between equitable service or adjusting depot model.
- Solid waste programs should anticipate barriers to participation, including seniors, those without vehicles, etc.
- Organics and yard waste programs are top of mind. Lots of interest and questions as people adjust to new program.

Landfill open house and tour had 142 people attend. Overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees, with overall support for guiding principles and goals and most feeling that touring landfill made solid waste management tangible and visible. Suggestions included:

- Taking a more global perspective
- Encouraging the ban or reduction of packaging on store-bought products
- More focus on the Rs
- Greater emphasis on consumerism
- Preventing harm to local environment
- More emphasis on corporate responsibility and financial sustainability, such as using landfill gas to generate electricity and equitable service levels across all areas

Key actions residents would like considered in next 10 years included:

- Need and value of increased education and accessible information
- Incentives to get people to recycle
- Expand curbside recycling services to other areas
- Organics collection in multi-unit buildings
- More repair cafés and salvage opportunities

M. Tatchell joined the meeting at 10:47 am.

L. Eason provided an overview of the CSWM community outreach events. Interacted with 2,264 people at 15 events since July. Overall support for draft guiding principles and goals, with only

concerns about how to achieve them, and key actions varied per community. Used mix of tools to boost engagement, including bean toss game for children, board with post-its to share thoughts on how to improve solid waste management in community, etc. General themes for each community were:

- Courtenay/Comox: Most questions were about carts and bi-weekly garbage pickup. Multi-family residences feel excluded. Comox residents want depot and have adjusted recycling methods to avoid going to Puntledge depot.
- Cumberland: Residents happy about waste management.
- CVRD Area A, B, and C: Royston residents curious about inclusion of yard waste, but don't feel it is necessarily needed. Area B and C residents are unhappy with private haulers and want curbside, especially residents who moved from municipalities and want consistency with service. Communities near municipalities curious about being given service similar to Royston.
- Campbell River: Happy about organics/yard waste. Curious when they will be receiving carts. Would like second depot in south Campbell River or all recycling picked up at curb.
- Zeballos: No event held in Zeballos, so resorted to door knocking with approval of Village. Residents would like better education, more frequent pickup at depot and options for refundables. Residents want to reuse what they have in community, and favoured idea of free store/re-store.
- Sayward: Recycling depot seems full too often, so need more bins. More education needed. Interested in hosting repair cafés or moving depot out of Village towards gas station. Love clean-up days.
- Tahsis: Want more depot pickups or bins. Composting program still has barriers keeping people from participating (composting in backyard, don't have car, etc.). Everyone wants to recycle and some want curbside for everything. Residents liked idea of repair café, so looking to host one in spring.
- Cortes: Residents loves depot and free store. Don't have a lot of space to hold construction material, so hoping to expand free store to include those items. Significant need to keep materials around longer with free stores.
- Quadra: Residents really want recycling depot and free store. Keen to do right thing and strong support for zero waste. Have a tool lending program.
- Gold River: Residents supportive of goals, but want expanded offerings. Happy about hours and that facility benefits from waste drop-off and recycling. Looking to host repair café in Gold River.
- Hornby: Need a re-store up and running, since can't leave construction material lying around. Everyone loves depot, and movement towards zero waste. Due to seasonal residents, can be more consistent with material provided.

K. Hamilton gave overview of online survey results. Survey was open for three months, with 509 surveys completed and 2,698 visitors. Overall support for guiding goals, with Goal 4—to responsibly manage waste, and to minimize the amount of residual waste in landfills—favoured most by residents. Advisory Committee can look into how to achieve the goals. Ideas suggested for how goals can be strengthened included:

- Focusing on costs, affordability and value for money
- The need for education
- Corporate responsibility
- Language used for goals could be simplified
- Keep the system simple/realistic/not overly complicated
- Recognize and address barriers to diversion and participation
- Yard waste options can be improved

Guiding principles received significant support, with Guiding Principle 5—prevent organics and recyclables from going into the garbage—favoured most by residents, and Guiding Principle 4—support polluter and user-pay approaches and manage incentives to maximize behavior outcomes—less favoured. Ideas suggested for how guiding principles can be strengthened included:

- Language could be simplified
- Increase emphasis on retailers and corporations
- Curiosity about how they can be achieved
- Affordability, value for money and cost-effectiveness are important considerations
- Education and communication are key

Key actions residents felt should be considered in next 10 years included:

- Increased education
- Invest in strategies and make recycling and composting easier
- Encourage greater corporate responsibility/requirements for businesses to reduce the amount of packaging and eliminate single-use products
- Expand institutional and commercial recycling and waste reduction programs
- Introduce more options for re-using and recycling household items, clean wood and appliances
- Introduce re-store or similar at waste management centre
- More equitable access to recycling and composting services in rural areas
- Either expand curbside collection to more areas or introduce more recycling depots
- Address illegal dumping
- Consider frequency of collection and size of curbside bins

An online open house was hosted on September 12, with 27 RSVPs and 12 attendees. An in-person open house was hosted on September 19 in Campbell River with 11 attendees. Despite the low turnout, the attendees actively engaged with staff and provided insightful comments and questions. Questions and comments from the attendees were focused on:

- Recycling options for specific materials
- Curbside organics program, specifically organic bin size
- Frequency of garbage and organics collection
- Introducing curbside for CVRD Area B and SRD Area D
- Expanding curbside collection to capture all depot material
- Assisting businesses to reduce waste
- Discouraging use of bottled water

Advisory comments:
None.

Step 2 Consultation "What We Heard" Report Discussion
K. Hamilton requested comments and questions from the advisory committee. Advised that the consultation report will be posted on the CSWM website after finalization.

The advisory committee was asked the following two questions:

1. What have we learned so far? What are your key takeaways?
2. What are your priorities for action after hearing from the community and through the discussions we've had so far?

Advisory comments:

- Do we have the ability to affect that change regarding putting the responsibility back onto the suppliers? Would require feedback to the provincial and federal governments. Part of that ability can come from direct pressure to and conversations with a small set of large distributors, such as grocery chains and online vendors, plus consumer pressure, which can be supported by this group alongside other efforts. That will feed back to sources, since they depend on those large distributors.
- Education is important, especially for what should go where. More can be done to reduce packaging and improve producer responsibility. Interesting that there were only 3,000 unique online visitors, since should expect more if we have over 2,000 in-person interactions.
- CSWM visit to Quadra was before changes to private hauler, so may have heard comments about access to curbside that have been addressed by now. Residents are eager for depot, but also for transfer facility. Wish there would have been more results from outer islands and what we can do to provide solid waste services to communities that don't have facilities. SRD is conducting feasibility study on what solid waste recycling amenities would cost and what volumes would be required to trigger collection on these islands.
- What is the population of the outer islands? Challenging to determine due to seasonal population. Residents on outer islands are supportive of zero waste.
- Excellent summary of the consultations. It's important to keep the momentum moving.
- Does everyone have access to the app used in Campbell River: CR Recycles? We could use that as a tool for disseminating information across all the communities. Courtenay and Comox have apps, and CSWM is working with those municipalities and Cumberland to ensure consistent messaging across service area. Partnership with municipalities has allowed for effective messaging, such as with the rollout of the organics program. Municipalities control what is included and sent on each app, and need to be cognizant of number of notifications sent since residents may ignore the notifications if there are too many.

Sarah asked the advisory committee to reflect on their experience in their community. Next few meetings will look at solutions and how to achieve guiding goals and principles, so would like to hear suggestions from members.

- Everyone wants more services, but are also concerned about costs. Would be beneficial to provide estimated costs for expanded services, or maximize use of existing services. SRD Area C residents want equitable services. How can we support people who have limited accessibility to services?
- Education of what happens to recycled material is important. More willingness to recycle if people know what happens to their recyclables and that it's not going to the landfill. Equitable access also important.
- Good to see engagement at Hornby fall fair. Another community mailout/engagement explaining the SWMP process and where we are at in the process might lead to additional feedback. Important to close the loop with those who have been engaged so far.
- Community education and understanding of what is happening with landfills and transfer station stood out. Concerns about residents not understanding about landfills and transfer stations, what happens when a landfill is closed and why does it need to be closed, etc. May be helpful to have visual of how transitioning a landfill to transfer station works. Videos on project page may provide additional information.
- Important to keep momentum moving forward and close loop on communications. Should rework communications plan to refine and repeat messaging to provide to elected officials, since they're the ones being contacted by their constituents. Sympathy for outlying communities

who want access to services, and encouraged by their willingness to put in effort to be engaged in SMWP process. Opportunity to continue with messaging and communicating in a way that shows that people were heard.

- Area that seems to be most impactful and that is a priority is what we can do to reduce packaging, particular single-use packaging. Might be outside SWMP scope, but when discussing costs and value for effort, requirements for curbside pickup, amount of waste to be processed and future landfill space, reducing packing could be the single biggest positive impact we could have.
- Noted need for simplicity of language and would like whole process to be easier. Focus right now is on educating residents on using existing services, but will receive better results if we can make the process simpler for them. Other communities have recycling pickup that accepts anything recyclable and doesn't require sorting.
- There are a lot of rural areas where curbside makes sense. Interested in learning where curbside can be expanded. Still a lot of work to be done to support multi-family, with more consistent access to recycling, most likely in municipalities.
- Remarkable scale of outreach and the communities' level of engagement, providing a solid foundation for the SWMP process.
- Should make information more available. Realtors and property management company need to supply information to new or prospective homeowners or renters about services provided in area. School curriculum should have component about circular economy and include landfill tours. Should emphasize health aspect of waste economy.
- Should look to improve service in certain areas, such as rural areas, and identify areas where there is a real benefit for new or expanded services. Building the right services will see better utilization. Cumberland has multi-family building that has complained that recycling is going into garbage stream, so could benefit from better education and communication on solid waste management program. The challenge is how to engage those who don't want to be engaged.
- Town of Comox advocates for recycling depot to come back to Comox. Express & Go is most used in province, but not all materials collected there. People don't want to drive to Puntledge or landfill. Should advocate for additional materials to be included in curbside program. Biggest barrier to participating in recycling program is it's too complicated (take to different locations, store non-curbside items, etc.). Simplifying recycling will increase participation.
- Consultation report noted that military base had zero respondents. Unsure why no one responded, but base is largest employer in Comox Valley, so might be worth contacting DND directly rather than residents. Might also be worth contacting people based on their employment rather than residence, targeting large employers.
- Bumped into residents who attended community events and they were all well received.
- Should make recycling options easier. Good to see strong participation from smaller communities and speaks to interest from rural areas. Tahsis looking at how to better handle larger items and keep them out of landfill so as to extend its life. Wildlife issues are a strong consideration for rural areas, with a need to better manage food waste since it can attract wildlife. No way to dispose of food waste other than put in waste stream. Tahsis wants to keep landfill open as long as possible. Illegal dumping is universal, but especially acute in rural areas. Tahsis does have weekly curbside, but considering expanding curbside with recycling or compost.
- Courtenay and Comox have implemented automated cart system, which has been hottest topic for the City of Courtenay. Residents have been calling in about new system. New residents want to know how system works, so could improve communication on role of municipalities and CSWM. Community would benefit from return of Comox depot.

- Biggest takeaway is need for further education. Staff are looking at using online newsletter. Lot of education needed on recycling and services provided. Great that people are listening, but need to work on educating those who aren't.
- Important to get resounding yes from community. Not a lot of conversations or comments about services that aren't needed or can be removed, but residents usually interested in expanding or adding services, or simplifying process.

Next Steps
S. Willie requested that any further comments about the consultation report should be submitted by November 3.

Notified the committee that the Coast Waste Management Association online conference starts October 25 and lasts until October 27. Will host roundtable at next advisory committee meeting to share ideas or inspiration that came out of attending the conference. Asked the advisory committee if there were any challenges so far accessing the online sessions, but none were identified.

Advised the committee that the next meeting will be in-person at the CVRD office on December 14 from 10:30am to 3:30pm. Due to staff turnover, the members were asked to inform staff of any food allergies or preferences.

Advisory comments:
None.

Wrap-Up
S. Willie requested any outstanding questions, comments or thoughts.

Advisory comments:

- Further clarification on next steps was requested, such as when the SWMP process is expected to complete and what needs to be done to reach that point. Consultation summary report will go to CSWM Board next month. Staff will then begin working on options analysis, and anticipate more advisory committee meetings in winter/spring 2024 to discuss individual topics. Staff will be conducting more in-depth community sessions with formal presentations, with the occasional event in the spring but the bulk of consultation to be done in fall 2024. Might not get as much engagement with focused events, but expect greater turnout from those interested or concerned about specific issues, and can see increased engagement by focusing on local issues. Will be hosting another landfill open house in September and looking to host tour of compost facility in Campbell River. SWMP process expected to conclude in early 2025. Will look into building tool to keep financial model up to date, and make sure that there are staff to support initiatives and funding available. Will need to further investigate the role of the CSWM, CVRD/SRD, and municipalities for new services. Whole process will result in draft SWMP
- Quadra does not have curbside service organized by government. Previously had bag tag program, where Waste Management would drive around once a week and pickup bags with tags, but was frustrating for Waste Management to manage due to not knowing how many bags there would be, how long it would take to collect them and how much money they would make. Changed to subscription service.
- The next repair café event is held on November 18 at Lake Trail School in Courtenay.
- Flare being installed at Campbell River Waste Management Centre, so can begin burning landfill gas and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

V. Schau adjourned the meeting.

GENERAL:
The next Regional Solid Waste Advisory Committee is scheduled for December 14, 2023 at 10:30 am.

TERMINATION:
The meeting terminated at 12:11 pm.

Recorded by:	Certified correct:
M. Briggs	***V. Schau***
Michael Briggs Branch Assistant – Engineering Services	Vivian Schau Senior Manager of CSWM Services