

County Council Environmental Management Committee Meeting Notes – April 7, 2009

Agenda

In accordance with the agenda, this meeting included a presentation by Dan Pitzler, CH2M HILL and discussion on the following topics:

- Plan status
- Draft Implementation Plan

Public Statements

- None.

Council Member Comments

Kelly Greenwell – Asked “What is recycling”? Dan responded that it was the act of transforming materials that would otherwise be discarded into other useful materials. Mr. Greenwell responded that there are tremendous quantities of recyclables going into our landfills. We should stop messing around with expensive small scale recycling and instead involve other Hawai`i counties in a program with scale economies.

There are going to be 2,000 homes just up the hill from the closed Kailua-Kona landfill. Hawaiian Homes called me and asked if there is any reason they should not build homes there, and I told them “yes” because of the landfill. That landfill has been on fire off and on over the years and is incompatible with the development that is going on around it. We should request federal stimulus funds to dig up the landfill and process the material into useful compost. There is a lot of money available - we need to proactively go after this funding. If we don't fix it and they have to evacuate 2,000 homes we are all going to be sorry that we did not fix it.

Concerned about pay-as-you-throw – is afraid that people will just throw garbage into the nearby gulch. Dan replied that more than 7,000 communities in the U.S. have implemented pay-as-you-throw. There needs to be a proactive education program and time to get the program implemented appropriately. When that's done, other rural communities have seen some initial spikes in illegal dumping, but it quickly subsides back to levels seen prior to the new system.

Pete Hoffman – Expressed concern about not hearing household hazardous waste (HHW) being addressed in the implementation plan presentation: more needs to be done. Dan replied that the presentation was just a summary, and the plan will include an expansion of the number of HHW events.

In spite of the economy, we should remain aggressive in implementing the programs that we think are right – we don't want to be perceived as putting actions on hold. Also, what

does the plan say about attracting local businesses to process and use recyclables here in Hawai'i County, rather than shipping them off-island? Dan replied that the plan emphasizes on-site composting and engagement with farmers who need soil amendments, and looking for other opportunities such as glass-crete that can be done locally.

Brenda Ford – When you say backyard composting, do you mean really doing this in back yards? Dan replied yes this is a common program in many communities around the world and helps keep organic waste out of landfills. Are there other technologies besides waste-to-energy (WTE) that perform better as the size of the waste stream increases? Dan replied that most mass-burn WTE facilities are 1,000-3,000 tons-per-day in size and that the economics of all thermal facilities improve as the size increases: there is at least one vendor that is proposing gasification-plasma arc units in 100 ton-per-day modules.

Dominc Yagong – Expressed support for pay-as-you-throw. His own thinking on litter and recycling has evolved through time. He understood the concern Kelly had about the increase in illegal littering, but believes that people can change and will do the right thing.