

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Sub-Committee: Unsheltered Waste Management

Meeting Minutes

Date: February 11, 2021
Time: 4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Logistics: WebEx meeting with limited in person attendance due to COVID-19

PRESENT: **Members:** Julie Jackson, Ryan Zink, Matt Marler, Judy Skinner, Kevin Hines, Kaileigh Westermann-Lewis, Tim Rice, Brian Sund
Staff: Brian May, Elizabeth Parker
Guests:

ABSENT: Rachel VanWoert

OPEN MEETING

Ryan called the meeting to order at 4:06 p.m. and conducted roll-call.

APPROVE MINUTES

Julie J moved to approve the January 11, 2021 meeting minutes. Matt M seconds the motion. With no questions or comments, a voice vote was unanimous – motion passes.

UNSHeltered Waste Management Updates

Ryan has continued to work with Gretchen on this project. They recently became aware of one group called “Be Bold Street Ministries” who wants to pick up and clean up unsheltered waste in the Salem area. They picked up 4,500 pounds over three trips, and took it to transfer station, not Covanta. Ryan stated that he realizes there will need to be some type of vetting for clear direction as to where to take waste, what waste can be taken to Covanta, and also for liability if picking up trash on city property. Ryan is consulting with the City of Salem legal department for guidance.

Matt Marler stated they are prepared to take the material. He referenced the picture of city garbage truck that Ryan sent him – this vehicle method would work. Matt continued that if other volunteer groups want to use pick-up trucks, he won’t say no, but they would need to be scheduled for off hours when they’re not in the way of their normal traffic routines. Normal route trucks are fine. Matt sent Ryan information on unacceptable material, and will write up something for volunteer groups to advise on waste streams they accept. They can take large, bulky items like couches, but appliances, washing machines, etc. would be rejected. Ryan mentioned that the county could do reference guide for volunteers to establish where to take materials not accepted at Covanta. Matt said he will work with Brian M/Elizabeth on these communications. Brian M stated that there are significant safety issues for county transportation, and he’s trying to promote the use of the City of Salem facility in order to get hauls to the appropriate locations for the appropriate items. Vehicles could throw off the routine at Covanta – doesn’t want this effort to cause flow, safety, or accessibility issues.

Ryan stated that the “Be Bold Street Ministries” group has the support of a construction company that is moving forward in assisting the group in pick-up and waste removal. They are looking into buying trailer or transportation vehicle to best utilize time and space for waste management. Ryan asked the group what are the specs they should be considering? They are moving forward to have two 30-yard boxes put on the city property location to be loaded up for haulers to transport to Covanta. However, there are unknowns as to how to get trash from the trailers and/or pick-up trucks into the 30-yard box. What’s the best way to do this? The City of Salem has to work within the guidelines of the DEQ permit. Definitely, there are many unique things to consider.

Ryan asked Brian M what his next steps for the vetting process for access to Covanta would be. Brian M stated that the county needs to have a full understanding of expected volumes per month, year, etc. As non-profits or volunteers don’t normally go to Covanta, this is red flag for Brian M and he doesn’t want to see these groups just showing up. There is a procedure at Covanta that we will need to keep. A couple different drivers in garbage trucks, we can do, but we don’t want people showing up that we don’t know about. Ryan also thinks the vetting process must include ensuring “unknowns” don’t show up there. Matt M reiterated these would need to be “by appointment only” and they typically

know of appointments a couple days in advance. Matt prefers to work with county on admittance, access, and safety issues.

Brian M said he is concerned with the idea of trailers at Covanta. There are no safety guards at Covanta, so drivers have to be VERY experienced with backing a trailer to safely dump waste in the pit. The county sees issues and hazards with trailers backing up at the transfer stations quite often. Brian recommends we have people use pick-up trucks over trailers. He also agrees the pictures Ryan sent to Matt are more doable and better than trailer. Kevin agrees with all comments about trailers.

Kevin presented the Unsheltered Waste Management project at the last haulers board meeting, and he's pleased that everyone at the meeting is on board to help in any way they can; specifically hauling boxes. Brian advised his group that the haulers are not responsible for how material gets into boxes. Kevin's group will take care of scheduling trucks, routes, drivers, etc. He also advised his group that we're still working on firming up details and will keep them advised. Ryan asked Brian if he has an idea of what or if they'll place a cap of volume for this project? Kevin didn't go into that detail with his group, stating that volume hasn't been estimated or confirmed. Kevin confirmed that if volumes become unattainable, he will address with Brian M/Ryan/Matt M. In terms of volume, Ryan suspects that we may not know volume until we get more into the flow of this project.

Considering the long-term, Ryan hopes that when the COVID crisis is over, it will free up resources and people willing to help. He also hopes that at some point, the production of trash is reduced and people are off the street, while acknowledging that the efforts of this group are one small piece in a much larger cog. He shared his desire to consider and investigate how the resources people are providing to help the unsheltered aren't ultimately creating more volume - downstream effects. Brian M added that he spoke with Commissioner Bethell about this issue. She had a unique perspective focused towards where the unsheltered waste is coming from. Are we providing them "garbage?" She sees trash as items that people have donated but aren't appropriate. We need to look at waste prevention and provide useful items, not a grab-bag of things they don't need. She suggests we step back and assess the process to be sure we're not contributing to the problem.

Julie asked if there is an effort to get the unsheltered population vaccinated for COVID? Ryan stated he knows of the tiers put in place by the Governor, for first responders, etc., but isn't sure how or if the unsheltered population is being targeted in these efforts. Ryan will advise Gretchen to look into this issue. He shared that the availability of vaccines isn't meeting the needs of the tiers that are already in place.

Judy shared that in the Santiam Canyon, there have been so many donations of clothes for people affected by the fires, that now they have overwhelming quantities. Many churches are taking these clothes to many of the unsheltered parks and camps and giving them to the homeless. Whether it helps or hinders - this is going to be a difficult message to get out to the people who think they're helping.

Church at the Park is managing the waste at the new Oregon State Fairgrounds shelters. Julie will look into whether or not they're hauling boxes from fairgrounds. Matt M doesn't think so, as he would have been notified, but would like Julie to double check. Ryan stated that there is limited entry at fairgrounds, helping to restrict access to un-useful types of materials coming in.

Brian Sund shared that the Church at the Park now has a drop off donation center (that used to be a quick-mart) on Turner Rd, near the Paradise Village mobile home park. They accept a lot of items, but they are in need of recycled bags and food. Please be aware of food containers and be considerate of the waste stream. Brian shared that the car/vehicle camping sites were producing a high volume of waste. Judy asked for information on donation site location and items needed.

Kevin asked if we know where locations will be for drop boxes - Ryan is hoping waste material will go directly to Covanta. At the city site near the airport, the city has ordered machinery for another project, but he thinks it may help with this program, as well. Ryan is asking to put two 30-yard boxes at this location, but they have to fit within the DEQ permit. The original City of Salem project that was to be at this location ended up not fitting within the permit guidelines. He thinks this location is the best and most ideal for the unsheltered waste management needs. He's not sure on the progress the city has made with DEQ and hasn't heard of any meetings. He will continue to follow issues, opportunities, and progress. Knowing that there are often permitting issues with this type of use, he hopes that we can bypass permit issues and transport directly to Covanta.

Judy mentioned that the Metro Bag Program in Portland isn't working quite as well as they'd hoped due to different requirements for different entities, such as PDX. Ryan added that he received an email with answers to some questions

from his contact in Portland, but Ryan hasn't had the opportunity to ask any follow up question. Ryan was provided with a status report of the program which he is reviewing.

Tim R shared that he has a deep interest in collecting data on the unsheltered community as to why they're homeless, what are their addictions, etc. He has been thinking a lot about this and is truly interested in having a deep understanding of the circumstances and desires of the people living in these camps. He asked the group to advise as to whether or not he would be liable if a person he pays (employs), who is already familiar with the camps, were to be injured when in the camps asking people about their desires, situations, etc. He wants the information, but doesn't want to have legal issues. Ryan doesn't know about legal issues, but advised that he seek guidance. The point in time (annual count) of the unsheltered population was recently done. Brian Sund advised Tim to check with the Arches Project (located near Marion Square Park and the new police facility) as to numbers, statistics, etc. They would be the best resource to start with as to census-type statistics. He also said that the Church at the Park would be a group that "knows the camps" and might have people to help gather data. Brian also confirmed that a homeless "bill of rights" does exist. Judy agrees that Arches will have some of the information Tim is looking for and suggested that the Salem Hospital Emergency Department may have some numbers and addiction statistics from the unsheltered population they see there.

Tim said there is a newer camp at Hwy 22 and I-5 (behind Lowes) that is growing rapidly. The camp has moved approximately 100 yards further south on I-5, leaving pallets, garbage, and other items behind. This area is generating a large volume of waste. Tim would also like to get data on the number of unsheltered that want to stay in their current environment vs. those wanting to get out. Kaileigh agrees that info is out there, but cautioned Tim that seeking out this specific type of information directly from the unsheltered is not the best idea. Some programs have people who know camp names and the people living within them. She also suggested that it would be a great idea to have someone from within the unsheltered community address people to ask questions. She participated in a training session in Portland at Street-Roots where she learned about their environment, communication with the unsheltered, and procuring trust from this community. Tim doesn't want to cater to their situation or assist with an addiction – he just wants to get them into homes and better environments. He will research the suggestions provided.

Kaileigh suggested that the sub-committee consider inviting someone from within one of these groups to share details and issues from their environment. Brian S agrees that Kaileigh's idea is excellent. He stated that Arches has great people who've been connected with the unsheltered population and know first-hand about specific circumstances, situations, and desires, whether past, present, and/or future. Brian S will connect with them to set up where and when they can present these details to this group.

Ryan wants to respect scope of this group for waste management and asked if Arches could share information that would be in context with waste management? Brian said yes and will look into this further. The group decided it is definitely important and worthwhile information to hear and agreed to host time on the next meeting agenda. The group also agreed that these meetings can be regularly scheduled for the second Tuesday of every month at 4pm.

With no further questions or comments, Ryan adjourned the meeting at 5:18 p.m.

Next meeting: Thursday, March 11, 2021