November 12, 2019
Botanical Gardens

Members Present:
Mayor Dean O’Connor, Altoona
Council Member Bobbi Benz, Ankeny
Mayor Drew Merrifield, Carlisle
Council Member John Edwards, Clive
Mayor Frank Cownie, Des Moines
Council Member Chris Coleman, Des Moines
Council Member Tom Cope, Johnston
Mayor Tom Phillips, Norwalk
Council Member Jaki Livingston, Norwalk
Council Member Robert Sarchet, Polk City
Supervisor Matt McCoy, Polk County
Council Member Curt Gause, Pleasant Hill
Mayor Bob Andeweg, Urbandale
Council Member Kim Sacker, Van Meter
Council Member Russ Trimble, West Des Moines
Mayor Dave Burgess, Windsor Heights

Staff Present:
Alex Hassel, Policy Liaison, City of Des Moines
Jeff Lester, Des Moines City Attorney

Guests Present:
Leslie Irlbeck, Metro Waste Authority
Michael McCoy, Metro Waste Authority
Art Witmack, Taxpayers Association of Iowa
Daniel Stalder, Iowa League of Cities

Approval of the October 8, 2019 minutes were moved for approval by Bob Andeweg, seconded by Kim Sacker. All voted in favor. Motion carried.

Metro Waste Authority

Michael McCoy, Executive Director of the Metro Waste Authority, presented on the attached PowerPoint.

Questions:

Dean O’Connor – Referenced a photo of a Windsor Heights cardboard drop-off location that was overflowing with cardboard and had it stacked beside the bin.
Michael McCoy – This is a good picture and bad picture. Lots of communities are asking for cardboard drop-off locations. The one in the photo is the drop-off location at Windsor Heights. Every 2-3 days the drop-off sites are overloaded. During the first 2 weeks we picked up over 2,000 pounds of cardboard. This is an area we are trying to fill holes of need in the community.

Tom Cope – Is 13% of the material going to landfills cardboard? So, if you can divert it, it’s a 13% reduction of waste in the landfill

Michael McCoy – Correct, 13% is cardboard, and we are working to focus on glass next.

Russ Trimble – Are residents not supposed to be putting cardboard in recycling bins?

Michael – Yes, they can, but many aren’t cutting it down and they are putting it next to their bin, and our contracts don’t require workers to pick this up.

Dean O’Connor – Do you find that small businesses use this frequently?

Michael McCoy – Absolutely. A small gap we have to fill is the residential and small business that don’t have the space or money for their own recycling bin.

Dean O’Connor – I was on the committee to research MRF. Talking to those that run the facility in Las Vegas, your equipment needs to be 5 years old or less to be able to run effectively.

Chris Coleman – Will today’s technology be obsolete in 5 years or is this a 20-year solution?

Michael McCoy – We are going to need to update our equipment constantly. Not huge pieces, but it will need to be kept up. In the design we left room in our sorting facility for a robot. We don’t have one yet, but we have room.

Dean O’Connor – You will want to build your building with space to grow so you have the space to swap out components as tech advances.

Matt McCoy – With the china ban on mixed paper what’s the economics? Ultimately, we’re going to have to pay someone to take it.

Michael McCoy – You would think that by the articles. True, they are banning a lot. They are still taking more than what’s led on to. The processors in China bought 3 old mills in the U.S. that are going to be up and running next year. The myth is that no one will buy our material. The reality is that the phone is ringing off the hook.

Matt McCoy – Where will your facility be located and how many miles from the metro?

Michael McCoy – That’s being tied down right now. Either location will have something that supports it on the other side. If you put it on the western side, we would put a transfer station on the eastern side.
Dean O'Connor – Can you explain the process of the transfer station?

Michael McCoy – Two transfer stations exist currently for your trucks on your streets to dump quicker and to not have to go all the way to the landfill. Semis then pick it up from the transfer station to bring it to the landfill. We'll do the same thing for our recycling facility.

Matt McCoy – Have you done a business plan for this facility?

Michael McCoy – We did a full 72-page feasibility study to get here. There have been 3 years of studying and vetting this.

Chris Coleman – I'm all in, but without reading the 72-page document, how do we explain the cost? Is it being paid for because we're able to generate revenue, or will it be through tipping fees on residential/government users?

Michael McCoy – Today you are paying a tipping fee to the current processor. Currently the way it is structured is on the back of residential to pay for commercial. We hope to do a Scott County model: tipping pays for operations and debt service. Rebate back program to rebate back to communities after the hitting bottom line. It will be a level playing field for everyone and they will all be paying into the system.

Chris Coleman – If we're going from 60-something to 70, is it fair to say the challenges with recycling, we can do this for less than a 10% increase?

Dean O'Connor – Here’s the part Michael’s leaving out. I’ve seen so many things fall apart on us that weren’t sustainable. There’s a system that’s not sustainable. Recycling is on that edge right now. The MRF we have right now is not sustainable and it’s been a bad relationship with them. As a board, we’ve tried to figure out how to move forward as a community as we keep growing. How to sustain the growth in 5, 10, 20 years.

Tom Cope – If your contamination is only between 0-5%, the product is also more marketable.

Michael McCoy – We didn't want to do this alone. Our current MRF has re-negotiated their prices 3 times within the existing contract. This will be something we have to do.

Chris Coleman – We shouldn't try to over promise. It is going to cost something. And we’ll want tons of input from the community. It’s good long-term for groups like yours to not overpromise, but say we're going down this path and it’s going to cost something but it will pay off in the long run.

Robert Sarchet – Can you clarify on the contamination. It is a comparative advantage from where we are now?

Michael McCoy – Through our education program and the curb-it program we’re at a 10% contamination which is very low nationally. This is through the education efforts.
Russ Trimble – The tipping fee is going to go up for the debt service. That combined with the ability to make money will help pay for the facility.

Michael McCoy – In the feasibility study we charge 71 cents a ton.

Tom Cope – In the current breakdown, what percentage comes from residential vs. commercial? Each city has their own contract with a company that picks up garbage, but who picks up the recycling?

Michael McCoy – Garbage is separate. For garbage we may put 2-3 cities together and bid that out. The metro bids and does RFPs and then manages all the contacts. We do both garbage and recycling, but some cities do some of it on their own. We contract recycling with one company that can do all of it on the curb it program. Some cities like Johnston that will be joining and having Metro take over the contracts. The current breakdown is 40-60 residential-commercial. We will look at different price tiers for private and public.

Russ Trimble – So the new equipment will be a big investment but we won’t have to scrap everything in the future, rather just add and adapt as we go?

Michael McCoy – Yes, plug and play as we go.

Tom Cope – When are you breaking ground?

Michael McCoy – Next spring or summer we will start construction, hopefully open in August 2021.

MAC PRIORITIES

Air BnBs/Rental Property Regulations

Defer this to next meeting.

Stormwater Mitigation Strategies

Bob Andeweg – Met with Capital Crossroads. This is moving along with another meeting today. The plan is to come back with strategies in the early spring.

Legislative Update

Defer this to next meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

John Edwards – We need a nominating committee. Possibly have Frank and Tom serve on that.
Meeting adjourned at 8:34 a.m.