

Gustavus Disposal & Recycling Center (DRC) Quarterly Staff Report
Paul Berry, DRC Manager/ Operator
Monday, August 8th, 2022

My last quarterly report was at the May 9th General Meeting. My next quarterly report is scheduled for the November 14th General Meeting.

General Operations and Management

Labor

Here is a list of who currently makes up the DRC's temporary labor pool (Pool): Ian Barrier is the primary operator of the Pool. In mid May Ida Peters left the Pool to work for Glacier Bay Lodge. In mid-June Jeffery Toms joined the Pool. Jeff has just moved to the community and is still getting settled in. Paul Dzubay is still in the Pool but has other work obligations. So overall, Ian Barrier is the primary operator with assistance from Jeff Toms or myself in Jeff's absence.

This month I plan on posting the position announcement for the DRC Operator position. I hope to work with our City Administrator to form a hiring committee and hopefully have a candidate for the position that the Council can appoint during the September general meeting. Bringing on an operator as a regular position is an important step because it implies commitment to the position – both from the City as the employer and from the individual committing to the position. I also want time to go through as many different aspects of the operation with the new operator as I can during the remaining time I have as the DRC Manager.

Waste stream data and the annual presentation of the rolling 5-year statistics report

While this is a busy summer, it seems slower than last summer. Slower makes it easier for the Operator(s) to keep up with the flow of customers coming to the main building. Based on hard data, what the point-of-sale database tells me, in July of 2021 the DRC collected and processed 55,710 pounds of recyclable and non-recyclable waste. In July of 2022 we collected 50,097 pounds of recyclable and non-recyclable waste, about 10% less than 2021. The waste stream is flowing less this summer. I'm fine with that.

Each August I am pleased to present the first snapshot of the previous fiscal year's waste stream data, this is the attached facility statistics for the previous five years. As I feared, our facilities recycling benchmark, the diversion ratio, has fallen for another year. The diversion ratio is the portion of the waste delivered that is recycled rather than landfilled and in FY22 that ratio has fallen below 50%. Around 2017 we had our peak with a diversion ration around 70%. The DRC is seeing more waste overall but it also also experiencing a reduction in how much effort the community is taking to separate their recyclable and non-recyclable waste. The good news in this, is that the operator(s) do recover a fair amount of recyclables from the waste that is destined for the mound. We recover most aluminum, metal, glass bottles and food waste before baling so our overall recovery ratio is higher than 50%, but the community is slipping in its effort of sorting their waste before it is brought to us. Some of this is from not being able to recycle all the grades of plastic that we could in 2017 but it is also that some members and businesses in the community are not taking recycling as seriously as they could.

Renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Park

I have been working with the National Park Service to manage Gustavus's waste stream for as long as I have been working at the DRC, 28+ years, and it has been a good working relationship for the most part. The last formal agreement with the Park regarding solid waste predates the city and was between the Park and the Gustavus Community Association – a vastly different epoch. It is time to update this MOU and this is an

opportunity to better describe the mutually beneficial relationship between the City and Park regarding the management of our communities solid waste. An updated MOU will also help the City as we go forward and seek funding of important improvement projects like the new composting facility and new main building.

Second biennial Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) collection event

This HHW collection event was on Sunday May 15th for households and Monday May 16th for businesses. Participation was good with 72 vehicles/ participants on the free, public day and 6 businesses on the not-free, business day. While businesses had to pay on a per pound schedule for the service, I must point out that what the City charged businesses was still less than what the service cost the City on a per pound basis.

Interestingly, the estimated weight of the material collected this year was 12,763 pounds, was very close to what was collected in 2018. With this event there was no “pouring off” of paints. Pouring off is where the contents of paint cans are emptied into a drum and the empty paint can is recycled or landfilled. In this event all containers went into large cardboard boxes “bulk boxes”. Bulk boxes are more expensive overall but not landfilling any “empty” paint containers locally is better for our unlined landfill.

Like in 2018 the City hired Clean Harbors (CH) to provide containers, manage shipping, provide labeling and to help with and oversee packing. I was disappointed with the performance of CH this time around. Like 2018 CH was to supply all the necessary shipping drums, boxes, absorbent materials and pallets to be used in the collection event. In 2018 they brought more than enough drums (we purchased some of the excess). However this time around CH neglected to provide any closed-top drums for the event and unfortunately this was discovered on the first day of the event. Closed-top drums are what is used to collect and ship liquids like old fuels, oils and anti-freeze – a very important item. Chuck Schroth saved us in this regard as he was able to provide a dozen drums for the event on very short notice. Also, the pallets CH provided for shipping were wider the typical 44” wide pallet which meant that all of their pallets had to be modified so that two pallets could fit side by side inside the shipping van. It was a cluster #\$\$@! that we remedied by using a sawzall to cut the pallets to size and in several cases the pallets already had a large cargo box of material sitting on them. Anyway, I no longer have the faith in CH like I did following the 2018 event. A clear benefit of having CH technicians available is that it insure everything is packed and labeled correctly (very important) but in the future I would look at having more training for DRC staff and less dependence of CH staff especially considering that CH’s staff was one of the most expensive components of the event. In 2018 we shipped approximately the same amount of HHW as this year at a cost of \$16,225. The price tag for this year will likely be well over twice the cost, in the neighborhood of \$36,000 - \$38,000. It takes a while for Clean Harbors to process the material and settle their bill.

As a part of this collection event we also offered free collection of lead-acid batteries (battery collection was not one of CH roles during the event). These batteries are typically heavy making them expensive for the consumer. However, they also have a relatively high value to the battery recycler which helps cover their high shipping cost. This makes the free collection of lead-acid close to a wash for the City. I’ve guesstimated that we collected around 6,000 pounds (two pallets, each three layers high) of lead-acid batteries during the event.

Our next HHW collection event is scheduled for 2024.

Zender Group’s Integrated Solid Waste Management in the Field (training utilizing the DRC)

This training started after the arrival of the May 9th ferry and wrapped up with the departure of Thursday’s ferry on May 12th. Eight individuals from places like Pedro Bay, Chefornak, Evansville, Metlakatla, Klawock, Hoonah, Haines, and Wrangell came to Gustavus to learn

about food waste composting, recycling and solid waste management. There were three Zender staff including myself, two representatives from ADEC and two guest speakers – Lisa Daugherty of Juneau Composts! and Jonathan Rubbo of Totemic Solutions (Jonathan has helped Yakutat with their new in-vessel composting project). There were classroom talks where attendees described what their operations and challenges were. We discussed the business of trash, composting and background information and history of the DRC. There was a field trip to the DRC, the Park's Depot, the community garden, the community root cellar and the Community Chest. At each location there was local representative to talk about the history and operation of their facility. All of my time for this training was covered by the Zender Group so there was no cost to the City for hosting this training. I do hope that the City can continue to work with the Zender Group even after I retire as Gustavus has a lot to offer other small communities that are seeking to expand their recycling capabilities.

Community Chest

This is a good summer for sales and the Chest has moved a lot of merchandise. As in many past summers, the Chest is open three days a week.

For July our sales desk volunteers have been: Robynn Jones, Connie Darnell, Midge Bartosovsky, Mary Healy, Annie Mackovjak, Jeanette Dehart, Vicki Bender & Mary Williams. During July sorting, purging, stocking and other site work has been performed by Betty Hansen, Annie, Cheryl Smith, Joyce Lupro, Joyce Gallagher, Paola ?, Deb Johnson, Becky King, Ilana Guttmann, Denise Pratschner, Vikki Garret, Penny Cook, Jean Smith, Rosemarie Gray, Kim Ney and Kelly Vandenberg.

Many thanks to all the individuals who keep the Chest alive – we are all the beneficiary.

Capital Project Summaries

New Composting Facility/ Quonset replacement

Project description:

As described in previous reports, the objective of this project is to replace the failing Quonset structure with a more robust composting facility capable of processing greater amounts of material in a more temperature controlled manner. A better configured facility will make it easier to periodically turn the compost as it goes through its thermophilic phases. These are important qualities which the current facility has never been able to accomplish. Another goal of this project is to pave more of the composting yard with concrete and install concrete push walls behind the piles of stored wood chips, sawdust, overs and curing compost. These are steps which will aid the operator so that it will not take as much time as currently does to run the operation and will improve the quality and quantity of the material we can compost.

Project status:

As stated in my previous reports this project is several years behind schedule.

Unfortunately there is no cheap solution to replacing the Quonset. Walls made out of concrete Eco-blocks don't pass muster for stability when used as a foundation and the facility needs concrete for equipment to push against and to maintain a hard working surface in our very wet environment. Further complications for this project are that cost increases for concrete, construction materials and labor which have pushed the project's budget well beyond the \$106,000 currently available for the project.

I have begun the process of redoing the plans from the 2020 attempt to change the length of the five bays from 10' feet long as called for in the original plans to 20' long. This will more than double the capacity of the facility without necessarily doubling the cost. Unfortunately,

because of the amount of concrete and the high labor costs associated with municipal projects, we can expect this project to probably come in over \$250,000.

Currently this project is in a (re)design phase. As a stop-gap measure for getting another year (or two) out of the Quonset, we have added dirt to the outside of the wall that is currently leaning out in the hope that we can make it stop caving out without caving it in. Composting without the Quonset or any other structure would be difficult and there would be problems with precipitation and birds getting into the material. It is an expensive facility to replace but composting on a community wide scale is very valuable to us in several regards. Having a composting facility allows the City to process 70,000+ of food waste on an annual basis, provide the community with many yards of garden quality compost, a reduction in greenhouse gases, and provide for the conservation of landfill capacity. In other words, it is a good investment.

New main building

Project description:

As mentioned in previous reports the new building will be designed to replace the functionality of the current landfill building. The current landfill building has two critical shortcomings:

- 1 It is too small to be able to properly accommodate the amount of waste throughput on a daily or weekly basis. It is also too small to house the proper equipment needed to process effectively the community's waste stream.
- 2 It was not constructed to allow the full use of powered equipment, such as a small loader or forklift, within the building. Evidence for this is a lack of concrete push walls or metal clad barrier posts beside drive through openings.

Project Status:

If you are interested in learning more about the steps that have taken place up to this point in time, then I suggest reading my earlier reports. Currently I am working with PND Engineering to produce a preliminary building design package and to come up with an accurate estimate for the cost of constructing the new building. Matt Holm, an engineer with PND came to Gustavus on June 3rd to look at the project site and talk in-person. This past Friday, July 29th, I had a teleconference with Mark Sams, also with PND, and we went over his preliminary diagram of the new building and its access. We looked at building layout, workspace sizing for the delivery and equipment work areas, door location and equipment access to the building. Because the new building will be built on the area that includes the existing driveway, and the fact that the public end of the new building will be much closer where the rope gate currently is, we will have to add a new driveway with a large loop that will have to be developed where piles of wood debris, rock and dirt and rock are currently located.

One important factor in this planning process is the future of the existing building. For efficiency, the new building has to be built as close as possible to the in-flow storage yard which puts it right next to the existing building. To do this the existing building will need a roof modification to tie it into the new building – something that adds to the construction cost. However, after construction of the new building, the taller back half of the existing building could be converted to a heatable shop. And the front area of the existing building, where the public sorting area is, could be used for bale storage or as a resale area for merchantable material such as building materials, pipe fittings etc. that are currently stored in various piles around the DRC. The existing building has a good foundation and there is never enough covered space at the DRC. I would like to see PND's design look at ways to join the roof line of the existing building with that of the new building.

As far as a timeline for this phase of the project, I think at best we'd have a basic conceptual

drawing and a rough order of magnitude for cost before the end of the year which will allow the Council ample time to consider the proposal and if the proposal is accepted, for the City to start finding funding sources in the next budget/ funding cycle.

The end, thank you.

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08/03/22