

**FIRST PUBLIC HEARING
ON WASHTENAW COUNTY
WESTERN WASHTENAW RECYCLING AUTHORITY**

**Tuesday, June 29, 2021
Held Remotely Via Zoom Videoconferencing**

Members Present: Maciejewski, McCormick, McCririe, Pratt, Schmidt, Smith

Members Absent: Dries

Others Present: Theo Eggermont, Director of Public Works
Marc Williams, Facilities Manager

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Schmidt at 5:33 p.m.

2. BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS ROLL CALL

Schmidt attending remotely from Ann Arbor, Michigan, Washtenaw County. McCririe attending remotely from Ann Arbor, Michigan, Washtenaw County. Pratt attending remotely from Scio Township, Michigan, Washtenaw County. Smith attending remotely from Ypsilanti Township, Michigan, Washtenaw County. Maciejewski attending remotely from Dexter Township, Michigan, Washtenaw County.

Eggermont introduces himself as Director of Public Works, attending remotely from Scio Township, Washtenaw County, Michigan.

3. REMOTE MEETING GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOLS

Schmidt requested everyone stay on mute unless it is their turn to speak. Board Members are requested not to use chat feature. Instructions were given to the public in attendance of how to be identified as wanting to speak.

It was explained that Public comment will be divided into two parts. Those living in District 1 (Chelsea), will speak first, and then those living in District 2 (Townships of Bridgewater, Lima, Lyndon, Manchester and Dexter), will speak next. Attendees were instructed to state their names and address when speaking. Comments limited to three minutes per person.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Maciejewski, supported by Pratt, to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

5. PURPOSE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Eggermont explained the purpose of the meeting is a special assessment that's being considered under Public Act 185. He stated the Township Board Trustees for Dexter, Lima, Lyndon, Manchester, Bridgewater, and Chelsea have passed resolutions to initiate the process. The Board of Public Works and Board of Commissioners has recommended the process proceed to this point. He explained the next step in the process is to hear objections to the improvement and to the special assessment according to Public Act 185 and for the Board to determine how to proceed. Eggermont explained that if attendees would like to object and take their case to the Michigan Tax Tribunal, that they can write a letter or speak during this public comment period, whereby such objections will be documented. Eggermont noted that this is a special assessment district that's being considered for the maintenance and operation of the WWRA collection and processing of

recycling material. Eggermont then introduced Marc Williams, Facilities Manager, to provide further description of WWRA and their operations.

6. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Marc Williams explained his background; he has been at WWRA since 2007, and Facilities Manager since 2016. Williams gave a history of WWRA: it started in 1991 to facilitate residential recycling. It was funded originally from a \$330,000 grant from the DNR. Currently the WWRA collects 30 to 40 yard roll-off containers of recycling from the Townships of Dexter, Lima, Lyndon, Manchester and Bridgewater. The WWRA provides curbside recycling in the City of Chelsea. Williams explained that recyclables are brought back to the Waste Management Facility, dumped on the tipping floor, pushed into a pile, and then fed through the sorting system. Sixty-five to seventy-five tons of recyclables are recycled per year. Williams listed the materials that are accepted: household paper, cardboard, plastic bottles, tin cans, aluminum cans. He explained that they also handle roughly fifteen-hundred to two-thousand tons of waste a year. The bulk of the waste stream contains "fine tailings," which is anything smaller than one inch in diameter. These items get ejected from the system first. He further explained another bulk of the waste stream is plastic bags, of which they receive ten to twenty tons per week. The rest of the waste stream consists of illegal dumping along with the residuals from the sorting system. Altogether, about one-hundred to one-hundred-fifty tons per month of waste gets sorted out of what is actually recyclable. He further listed other waste items that complicate the recycling process: garden hoses, tires, clothing, batteries, electronics, bricks, et cetera.

Williams described that the largest volume of materials processed are fibers, cardboard and paper, which constitutes approximately fifty-five hundred to sixty-five hundred tons a year. That material is sent to Graphic Packaging in Kalamazoo, who in turn make boxes out of the fibers. He described the second largest volume of materials processed are plastics. The plastic material is sent to a mill in Dundee called Clean Tech, who in turn breaks down the material into pellets which can be used for making plastic containers and clothing. The third highest volume of materials is metals, which is sent to scrap yards to be disbursed to automotive suppliers. The fourth highest volume of material processed is glass, which in 2017 started to be sent to a glass vendor, whereby they break down the material to create fiberglass insulation, highway bedding, sandblasting material, and glass bottles.

Williams described a pilot styrofoam recycling event which took place June 2021 to collect Number 6 foam only. Nine-hundred pounds of foam was collected the first weekend. This program is scheduled to be done again in July 2021, hopefully expanding it to the whole county.

Williams discussed WWRA efficiency measures. He explained that WWRA produces a clean, quality product, which enabled them to still move their product even when the market was saturated. He described contracting with commercial trash haulers so that after WWRA deposits their trash to the landfill, WWRA then bring back recyclables which were dumped in the landfill and processes the recyclable material at WWRA. The benefit of this is that it cuts down on WWRA's trash bill and decreases the amount of recyclables going into the landfill. He described further efficiency measures which include: having obtained new recycling service accounts; maintaining an equipment replacement schedule; cross-training staff; and obtaining a grant from EGLE for safer and efficient equipment upgrades.

7. OPEN PUBLIC HEARING ON WWRA OPERATING MAINTENANCE ASSESSMENTS DISTRICT 1 (CITY OF CHELSEA)

Vice Chair Schmidt opened the public hearing on special assessment district 1 at 5:51 p.m. Eggermont read a letter that was submitted:

Phillip R. Seybert, City of Chelsea, wrote that he is a general partner of Sylvan Pines, LDHA, LP, which is a ninety-eight unit affordable senior housing independent living facility. He believes that the special assessment district is inequitable to multi-family housing projects. He expressed that Sylvan Pines, being one building with ninety-eight units, is being assessed the same amount as if they were ninety-eight single family dwellings. He stated that the WWRA only has to make one stop at Sylvan Pines, instead of ninety-eight stops, ergo, they should not be assessed as ninety-eight units. He further expressed that their maintenance man on staff has to take the recycle bins downstairs for pick up, which results in an annual out of pocket cost to Sylvan Pines of \$4,800, in addition to the \$9,800 per year being paid for the assessment. He clarified he and his residents are not against recycling, but thinks the assessment is inequitable. He requested that WWRA take a hard look at how the existing and proposed assessments are being levied as to multi-family projects. He also believes they should be able to opt in or out of the recycling program/assessment.

Since Seybert was also attending via phone, Eggermont acknowledged him to speak. Seybert reiterated the same objections/concerns stated in his letter. Katz requested Seybert to spell his last name, and provided instructions for any other speakers to state their first and last name, property address, municipality, county, and state.

Vice Chair Schmidt asked Eggermont if there were any other letters. There were no further letters for the District of Chelsea. Vice Chair Schmidt inquired if there were any attendees from the public who wished to speak regarding District 1 and again provided instructions on how to be acknowledged to speak.

Sandra Vadlamudi, City of Chelsea, expressed she is very much in favor of the recycling that is being done. She acknowledged that Seybert has a point about what they are assessed, but she would not advocate people opting out of recycling. She suggested maybe there's something that could be done to address the cost for multiple family housing.

8. CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING ON OPERATING MAINTENANCE ASSESSMENTS DISTRICT 1

Vice Chair Schmidt, seeing no further individuals wishing to speak, closed public hearing for District 1 at 6:02 p.m.

9. OPEN PUBLIC HEARING ON WWRA OPERATING MAINTENANCE ASSESSMENTS DISTRICT 2 (TOWNSHIPS OF BRIDGEWATER, LIMA, LYNDON, MANCHESTER AND DEXTER)

Vice Chair Schmidt opened the public hearing on special assessment district 2 at 6:02 p.m. and reiterated instructions for speaking.

Judy Dent, Lyndon Township, expressed she is in an underserved community. Their area is already highly taxed and it seems to her that they are constantly being asked to fill the trough. She noted that Williams had mentioned a \$330,000 grant the DNR gave WWRA, and her perspective is the DNR gets money from the state, so she is paying the state in taxation which is going to WWRA. She offered two other ways that potentially could assist instead of tax payers paying for special assessments. One way is to request a fee to recycle electronics like TVs, Dish boxes to the tune of \$40. Another way is to install cameras to catch those who are illegally dumping at the site,

get their license plates, and fine them. She further offered that possibly raising prices to their vendors would assist with the cost. Eggermont noted that she's at her three minutes if she wants to wrap up. Dent summed up that she is objecting to renewal and/or additional special assessments at this time.

Drew Zemper, Lima Township, stated he is probably less informed than other people, as he just got the flyer the other day, but is wondering if this is the type of recycling where he drives to the dump locations. He and those on his road already have a service they pay for, GFL, and recycling is already included in that, and the service GFL provides is pick up, so he isn't sure how this would affect any of those services unless it's just an added cost for the millage. He would obviously not want to be paying twice for a service if using through one company already. He inquired if this would be pick-ups at the house or the dumpsters they'd have to drive to. Eggermont advised this is for drop off locations. Zemper stated as a household, he would want to keep using what they have since they pick up.

Vice Chair Schmidt acknowledged that he forgot to inquire if there were any letters for District 2, so he will come back around to that.

Bob Kellum, Manchester Township, stated he is a long-time recycler and supports WWRA, however he feels like recycling is a backwards and convoluted process that needs improvement. He would like to see better communication/education between WWRA and the people using the service, because an educated consumer can be a better recycler, and could also be a proponent of the service in the community. He discussed that ideally the businesses who make the products that need to be recycled should start shouldering some or all of the costs of recycling, and the consumer to pay less and less. He suggested overall that it would be better to have more two-way communication/education to the public, whether via email or newsletter, or combination. He was unaware that there had been a styrofoam recycling because he would have been very interested in participating in that.

Vice Chair Schmidt inquires of Eggermont regarding any letters sent from people in District 2. Eggermont acknowledged receiving one letter:

Phillip Carolan, Tipton, Michigan, wrote to protest any recycling and processing system and any assessment associated with it. He discussed that he is just across the Lenawee County line, so a Washtenaw resident whose assessment comes through Manchester. He does not receive any trash pick-up service from the County or Township and has to pay for his own private trash pickup through Modern Waste Systems, which already includes recycling. He protests the fact that everyone would be paying for a service few would gain from and shouldn't pay for a service that isn't provided to him, especially when he is already paying for it on his own.

Vice Chair Schmidt inquired if there was anyone else who wished to speak. There was no response.

10. CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING ON OPERATION MAINTENANCE ASSESSMENTS DISTRICT 2

Vice Chair Schmidt, seeing no further individuals wishing to speak, closed the public hearing for District 2 at 6:16 p.m.

Eggermont pointed out to Vice Chair Schmidt that Member McCormick is now present and needs to identify himself and his location. McCormick attending remotely from City of Ypsilanti,

Michigan, Washtenaw County.

11. BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS TO APPROVE/DENY RESOLUTION TO PROCEED WITH THE PROJECT APPROVING THE PROJECT AND COST ESTIMATES, DETERMINING THE SPECIAL ASSESSMENT DISTRICT, DIRECTING THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS TO PREPARE THE SPECIAL ASSESSMENT ROLL, AND SCHEDULE THE SECOND PUBLIC HEARING ON THE SPECIAL ASSESSMENT ROLL

Katz interjects to remind that a motion and support is needed to close the public hearing for District 1 and 2.

Motion by McCormick, supported by Pratt to close public hearing for District 1. Motion carried.

Motion by Pratt, supported by Maciejewski to close public hearing for District 2. Motion carried.

Motion by McCormick to proceed with the project, supported by McCririe.

Discussion: Smith wanted to make clear the comments raised by the public to be addressed in special assessment in some way in formal writing at the next meeting. Vice Chair Schmidt stated to Eggermont that this could possibly be addressed, for instance the public concern about addressing multi-family units to see if there's any consideration for an adjustment there. Pratt acknowledged the concern of people wanting to opt out. He commented that this is a five year millage, and that if people who already receive a different service want to opt out, the logistics of that could be problematic, but he wanted to verbalize that the Board heard the concern.

Eggermont added that it's challenging because it is hard to know over five years who is in and who is out of recycling programs. Also some individuals he has talked to say they may have their own service, but when they have oversized cardboard or an excessive amount of materials, such as around holidays, they will use the drop off sites, so it's difficult to know who uses things when. Maciejewski commented that she is resident of Dexter Township, who has been having difficulty with their local hauler, and if they are truly taking materials to a recycling processing facility or not, so they currently are taking materials to the drop off to ensure materials are actually being recycled. She further noted that often recycling is, quote, "included" in the rate, and there's not necessarily an opt out feature, but you don't always know where it's going either. She further echoed Eggermont's comments about people's use of the drop off facility outside of their own paid for curbside service. Vice Chair Schmidt echoed the comments of Maciejewski, that there have been concerns if private companies are actually recycling materials or not. Maciejewski further explained that the assessment also covers general operating, which includes education, to which Eggermont concurred. Williams stated yes, they are looking to have an open house/tour at the facility, especially when the updated equipment is installed. He further stated they do presentations to schools and retirement communities.

Roll call vote: Vice Chair Schmidt, yes. Maciejewski, yes. Pratt, yes. McCririe, yes. Smith, yes. McCormick, yes.

Motion carried.

12. NEXT STEPS

Eggermont described that they will take comments and protests under consideration and will proceed with scheduling a second hearing as noted in the resolution. Another letter will be sent to those in the special assessment district and published in newspapers regarding the next public hearing, which will again be held digitally via Zoom on August 10th at 5:30. The purpose of that meeting is to hear objections to the roll, to basically determine who is in/out, as well as finalize everything. Vice Chair Schmidt confirmed with Eggermont that if someone spoke at this meeting that their rights are preserved to protest to Tax Tribunal and don't need to attend second hearing, and Eggermont confirmed that is correct, whether it was verbally at this meeting or in writing a

letter.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Pratt, supported by McCririe, to adjourn the public hearing. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Molly Maciejewski via remotely
Molly Maciejewski, Secretary