

Ulster County Legislature



UC RRA Reform Committee

Meeting Minutes

April 18, 2024 at 9:30 AM

KL Binder Library, 6th Floor, County Office Building, Kingston

Committee Members:

Mike Baden, Chair

President, Ulster County Association of Town Supervisors and Mayors

Tracey Bartels, Vice-Chair

Legislative Chair Designee

Legislator Manna Jo Greene

Energy, Environment & Sustainability Representative

Laura Petit

Minority Designee

Comptroller March Gallagher

Ulster County Comptroller

Deputy County Executive Amanda LaValle

Ulster County Executive Designee

Jim Gordon, Vice-Chair

UCRRA Board of Directors

PRESIDING OFFICER: UCRRA, Chair Baden

LEGISLATIVE STAFF: Lizvett Bost, Legislature Administrative Assistant

PRESENT: Chair Baden, Vice-Chair Bartels, Legislator Greene, Comptroller Gallagher, Deputy County Executive Amanda LaValle, Laura Pettit, Jim Gordon, Vice-Chair UCRRA Board of Directors

ABSENT: None

QUORUM PRESENT: Yes

OTHER ATTENDEES: UCRRA Executive Director, Marc Rider

Call Meeting to Order: 9:37 AM

Approval of the March 21, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Motion No. 1

Motion to APPROVE the Minutes of the March 21, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Motion By: UCRRA Vice-Chair, Gordon
Motion Seconded By: Laura Petit
Voting In Favor: Chair Baden, Vice-Chair Bartels, Legislator Greene, Deputy County Executive Lavalley, UCRRA Vice-Chair Gordon, Laura Petit
Voting Against: 0
Abstention: 0
Disposition: **MINUTES APPROVED**

Comptroller Gallagher discussed the contract between UC and RRA with Committee members. The contract expires in March 2025.

Comptroller Gallagher highlighted the need to update definition of regulated recyclables to account for future technologies and materials.

Comptroller Gallagher suggested making it easier for the agency to take on responsibilities by modifying the contract language related to maximizing revenue. She raised concerns about the contract's requirement to "maximize revenue" suggesting it may be a barrier to the agency taking on certain responsibilities.

Comptroller Gallagher said that government agencies should prioritize maximizing revenue, but also consider the potential public benefit from making expenditures.

Legislator Greene highlighted the challenge of balancing revenue maximization with public good, citing examples of waste haulers finding ways around high tipping fees.

RRA, Vice-Chair Gordon said that the RRA board had considered higher tipping fees as a way of raising revenue, but had faced strong resistance from towns, and so decided to only break even, and thus keep lower tipping fees.

Vice-Chair Bartels advocated for removing language barriers to necessary upgrades and recognizing the limitations of recycling.

Chair Baden suggested reworking contract to prioritize revenue generation while balancing costs. He proposed upgrading MRF to accept other recyclables to maximize revenue.

UCRRA Executive Director, Marc Rider defended past actions by RRA Board officials regarding reluctance to maximize revenue, citing promises made to County Executive and County Legislative members to avoid activating net service fee provision in UC/RRA contract.

Legislator Greene argued that culture of not raising tipping fees has impeded progress and caused stagnation.

Legislator Greene would like to clarify language in contract renegotiation, focusing on external costs and benefits.

Comptroller Gallagher suggested emphasizing the importance of enforcement in solid waste laws.

Legislator Greene stated that the food waste law is not being enforced and very little enforcement is occurring on all the food waste laws and it is something that she believes needs to be addressed.

Laura Petit raised concern about enforcement document from 1991, suggesting it's time for review and revision.

Comptroller Gallagher highlighted contract's success, but notes need for give-and-take on net service fee adjustment and suggested including cost and waste diversion in the formula for calculating recyclable material revenue.

Vice-Chair Bartels mentioned budgets and net service fees, with a focus on the past and present interpretations of the contract and highlighted the need for clear language in the contract to avoid confusion and misinterpretations.

Chair Baden mentioned the County Legislature's role in approving budget modifications.

Vice-Chair Bartels explained the agency's responsibility to provide budget information and the legislature's right to request modifications. She highlighted the challenges in aligning the agency's financial timelines with the legislative budget cycle.

Vice-Chair Bartels stated that the net service fee is a look backwards. She said budget reconciliation of previous year's budget come in March. That presentation in March can impact the upcoming annual budget cycle.

Committee members discussed how to regulate vendors while minimizing costs and maximizing benefits for the host community.

Committee members discussed the best structure for solid waste management agency, with some advocating for public authority and others suggesting UC assume a larger role, by Sol.

Comptroller Gallagher highlighted section 303 of the contract, which requires County to deliver solid waste to agency. She believes that it would be very helpful to put together a timeline that also incorporates the public authorities Accountability Act requirements on the agency.

Vice-Chair Bartels mentioned that monthly reports were provided to the environmental boards, but the information has been reduced over time.

Chair Baden mentioned the importance of enforcement data, specifically tonnage reports and monthly enforcement reports.

Chair Baden presented a draft outline for the Commission's mandated report, done with assistance of Deputy County Executive Lavalley. Outline includes sections on diversion, disposal, intergovernmental cooperation, economic impact, conclusion and appendix and attachments.

Deputy County Executive LaValley highlighted the need to focus on the contractual agreement and its implications for the agency and the council.

Chair Baden agreed that a condensed list of diverted items is not necessary but wants to ensure the report includes information on public benefits and review permissions.

Committee members discussed potential alternatives to landfilling solid waste, including export by rail and other technologies and potential waste management solutions. They noted an official list of methods and technologies is included in the current Solid Waste Management Plan.

Next Meetings: Every Thursday in the month of May

Adjournment

Motion No. 2: **MOTION TO ADJOURN**

Motion Made By: UCRRA Vice-Chair, Gordon

Motion Seconded By: Laura Petit

No. of Votes in Favor: 6

No. of Votes Against: 0

TIME: 11:32 AM

Respectfully submitted: Lizvett Bost, Legislative Administrative Assistant

Minutes Approved: May 2, 2024