

# Ulster County Legislature



## UC RRA Reform Committee

### Meeting Minutes

May 10, 2024 at 9:30 AM

KL Binder Library, 6<sup>th</sup> 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:** Michael Tierney, Legislative Support Specialist

**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

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**Call Meeting to Order:** 9:35 AM

Chair Baden and Deputy County Executive LaValle discussed inviting NYSDEC official for regional solid waste issues and inviting Kelly Turturo to a meeting.

Chair Baden sent a letter to haulers, including a copy of the resolution and inviting them to a meeting, but received no feedback.

Chair Baden and UCRRA Executive Director Marc Rider discussed the possibility of holding a meeting with haulers to gather feedback.

Vice-Chair Bartels and Comptroller Gallagher expressed concerns about delegitimizing the commission's work by not reaching out to haulers. It was noted haulers are presently not attending recycling oversight committee meetings. Vice-Chair Bartels seeks input from haulers, even if they don't respond, reaching out on legitimacy of recommendations.

Comptroller Gallagher worries changes in current solid waste regulations could lead to small operations in solid waste industry collapse, creating a monopoly, and higher costs for disposal of solid waste locally.

Chair Bartels expressed uncertainty about hearing from all 15 haulers, citing limited time left for the study.

Chair Baden suggested attempting to invite a representative from the ROC haulers for input, despite their lack of agency.

Chair Baden and UCRRA Vice-Chair Gordon discussed the lack of feedback from the legislature on their report.

Laura Petit suggested reaching out to contacts for waste management and transfer station.

Vice-Chair Bartels expressed concern about straying from the committee's charge to evaluate public benefits.

Chair Baden emphasized the committee's role in making recommendations to the legislature, not creating legislation.

Comptroller Gallagher seeks to resolve UCRRA/UC contract issues through additional work, including re-examining the mindset of minimizing costs and maximizing profits, which may be inappropriate for a public benefit corporation, such as UCRRA.

Laura Petit suggested using a shared document for information, and Chair Baden works on resolving access issues to the document.

Comptroller Gallagher highlighted three key takeaways from the discussion: timeline of requirements, enforcement, and minimizing costs vs. maximizing benefits.

Committee members agree on the importance of including notes in the report to reflect committee discussions and decisions.

UCRRA Vice-Chair Gordon expressed concerns about the structure of the UCRRA board and the decision-making process.

Vice-Chair Bartels suggested changing the board makeup to add accountability.

Vice-Chair Bartels highlighted the failure of previous legislatures to address the need for a landfill, despite political challenges.

UCRRA Vice-Chair Gordon and Deputy County Executive LaValle discussed concerns about giving five citizens the power to decide and pay for a county materials management system, citing political and legal considerations.

Legislator Greene suggested expanding the UCRRA board to improve collaboration.

Legislator Greene suggested addressing agency issues through contract or 5-year contract.

Chair Baden and members discussed potential for expanding board composition to include elected officials.

Comptroller March Gallagher acknowledges independent agency model has worked largely, despite challenges. Vice-Chair Bartels agreed, adding lack of original charge citation is a failure.

Vice-Chair Bartels expressed frustration with UCRRA and the county's lack of investment in upgrading the MRF and its strained relationship with the executive office.

Vice-Chair Bartels believed an autonomous agency could have brought a different outcome, but the County's current structure may not be workable.

UCRRA Vice-Chair Gordon expressed concerns about the UCCRA's structure and financing. He raised the option of UC taking in UCRRA as a county department. He suggested having the County Executive responsible for solid waste management could simplify decision-making and financing issues and expressed skepticism about dual agencies, UCRRA/UC), preferring a simplified approach.

Laura Petit suggested adding layers of departments may lead to more grants and resources.

Legislator Greene advocated for collaboration, while UCRRA Executive Director, Marc Rider has no preference between an independent agency or county department.

UCCRA Executive Director Marc Rider suggested expanding the board from 5 to 7 or 9 members to reduce the risk of losing board members all at once.

UCRRA Executive Director Marc Rider recommended including executive appointments on the board to ensure a diverse representation.

Chair Baden and Comptroller Gallagher discussed the potential for paying for a solid waste management system in the absence of UCRRA tipping fees. They expressed doubt about a system using property taxation based on land value, expressing concerns about the fairness of such a system.

Legislator Greene agreed with Chair Baden and Comptroller Gallagher, stating that property taxes are unfair and particularly hard on seniors.

Legislator Greene suggested calling the net service fee something else to avoid confusion.

Vice-Chair Bartels agreed with Chair Baden that increasing property taxes is not a viable solution.

Laura Petit expressed concerns about increased taxes and user fees for waste management services.

UCRRA Executive Director Marc Rider suggested increasing tipping fees for haulers to meet demand, particularly for seniors who can't drive or afford larger bins.

Chair Baden questioned whether capping hauler prices or implementing a user fee would be more effective in addressing tax concerns.

Committee members considered creating a solid waste district to address waste management issues.

Comptroller Gallagher and Vice-Chair Bartels discussed expanding the board to relieve burden on a few members and increase community knowledge of the agency.

Chair Baden and Laura Petit expressed concerns about a board size of 15 being unwieldy, with Baden preferring a maximum of 7 members and Petit suggesting 5 citizens and 2 from the legislature.

Vice-Chair Bartels suggested having elected officials on the board to provide support and bring everyone into the conversation.

Chair Baden proposed having one appointee from the executive's office and one from the legislature, with three at-large residents appointing the remaining members.

Vice-Chair Bartels and Chair Baden discussed potential changes to legislative appointments, including requiring a minimum of two appointments from the legislature and considering the minority party's representation.

Chair Baden suggested that the three at-large positions could be filled by one from the minority party, one from the majority party, and one legislator chair, while Vice-Chair Bartels expressed reservations about getting "into the weeds" of the proposal.

Vice-Chair Bartels questioned the split between executive and legislative appointments to the board.

Committee members debated appointments to regional transportation board, consider expanding membership.

Chair Baden suggested giving control of appointments to agencies themselves.

Vice-Chair Bartels suggested County Executive appointments should be made at the county level.

Chair Baden suggested a rotating appointment system for the UCRRA board to address minority vs majority concerns.

Vice-Chair Bartels is skeptical of this solution, citing potential problems with appointments.

UCRRA Vice-Chair Gordon and Chair Baden discussed the makeup of the UCRRA Board and the process for appointing new members.

Committee members offered suggestions and input on the outline for the UCRRA Board meeting, including the importance of institutional knowledge.

The Committee discussed how and when to work for a more detailed report.

Legislator Greene suggests dividing the report into sections for easier organization and collaboration.

UCRRA Vice-Chair Gordon offered to write Section 3, Chair Baden suggested reordering the report for clarity and conciseness.

**Next Meetings:**

Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup> @ 9:00 AM  
Thursday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> @ 9:30 AM  
Thursday, May 30<sup>th</sup> @ 9:30 AM

**Adjournment**

**Motion No. 2:**

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

**Motion Made By:**

UCRRA Vice-Chair, Gordon

**Motion Seconded By:**

Laura Petit

**No. of Votes in Favor:**

7

**No. of Votes Against:**

0

TIME: 11:17 AM

**Respectfully submitted:**

Lizvett Bost, Legislative Administrative Assistant

**Minutes Approved:**

June 13, 2024