

Ulster County Legislature



UC RRA Reform Committee Meeting Minutes

July 18, 2024 at 2:00 PM

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

Committee Members:

Mike Baden, Chair

Representative, 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: Chair Baden

LEGISLATIVE STAFF: Lizvett Bost, Legislative Administrative Assistant

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

ABSENT: None

QUORUM PRESENT: Yes

OTHER ATTENDEES: UCRRA Executive Director Marc Rider

Call Meeting to Order: 2:05 PM

Approval of the June 21st, June 26th, July 12th Meeting Minutes Postponed

Summary:

Committee members discussed long-term planning, waste management strategies, and improving recycling and disposal practices in Ulster County. Committee members debated the length of the contract for the Reuse Innovation Center, timelines for its implementation, and the importance of engaging municipal representation. They also discussed various waste management solutions, including advanced technologies, local or regional landfills, and community engagement. The priority of waste diversion over economic profit was a central theme, with speakers emphasizing the need for a robust market while also prioritizing waste diversion. The meeting concluded with a debate on the role of economic considerations in this priority.

Committee members wanted discussed contract length and page by page review of comments.

Legislator Greene raises concern about including dissenting opinions in the key points section.

Legislator Greene proposed benchmarks for waste management and reuse initiatives.

Vice-Chair Bartels expressed concerns about the 5–7 year contract term, suggesting that it may be too short to achieve meaningful benchmarks.

Comptroller Gallagher raised concerns about the agency taking on debt to meet benchmarks, suggesting that the county should assume responsibility in some way.

suggested breaking down the 5–7 year contract into smaller milestones to address concerns about debt and timeline.

Vice-Chair Bartels agreed with Comptroller Gallagher on the urgency of the reuse Innovation Center, but notes that the first-year design and fill may not be realistic.

Vice-Chair Bartels suggested a longer contract term to incentivize progress on landfill issues.

UCRRA Executive Director Marc Rider and Vice-Chair Bartels discussed the possibility of dissolving the waste management contract and the potential consequences for flow control.

Deputy County Executive LaValle raised concerns about the legal implications of terminating the contract and suggests including a termination clause in the recommendation to the county.

Deputy County Executive LaValle suggested long-term planning for resource recovery agency, while Speaker 8 proposes a 5-7 year contract with benchmarks.

Legislator Greene emphasized the importance of benchmarks to give agency guidance and provide a trial period.

UCRRA Executive Director Marc Rider agreed that benchmarks are necessary for the contract but disagree on the specifics of what those benchmarks should be.

UCRRA Executive Director Marc Rider suggested including a funding cap and extensions in the contract to provide more certainty and protection for the agency.

UCRRA Executive Director Marc Rider and Legislator Greene discussed the Zero Waste implementation plan, which is 75% done but needs someone to pull it together.

Vice-Chair Bartels suggested agency involvement in Zero Waste committee for legislative success.

UCRRA Executive Director Marc Rider and Legislator Greene discussed timelines for waste diversion and reuse Innovation Center construction.

Chair Baden proposed starting the discussion on benchmarks within six months of signing the contract, rather than setting a hard deadline for completion.

Vice-Chair Bartels recommended Ulster County government should remain responsible for solid waste management, and the UCRRA and Ulster County should sign a new contract with agreed upon milestones starting in 2025.

Deputy County Executive LaValle suggested updating the local solid waste management plan with the biennial updates and action items around the waste reduction and recycling plan.

Vice-Chair Bartels proposed including the Zero Waste implementation plan and the establishment of the resource innovation center in the contract with Ulster County, with identified timelines.

Legislator Greene and committee members discussed the need for a new contract with Ulster County to maximize waste diversion.

Committee members discussed the importance of advanced technologies in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and environmental impact.

Committee members discussed waste management strategies, including landfills and alternative technologies, with a focus on environmental and economic viability.

Legislator Greene suggested collecting C&D debris in different locations, including drop-off sites and community events.

Ulster County generated 101,000 tons of municipal solid waste, with 19,000 tons regulated recyclables.

Laura Petit mentioned that Ulster County generated 101,000 returns for recycling and composting and that is only what comes into the transfer station.

Deputy County Executive LaValle highlighted the importance of having a solid data point on food waste through on-ground waste audits, like the one conducted in Vermont.

Vice-Chair Bartels expressed concern about focusing on economic market for recycling, suggesting prioritizing diversion instead.

Legislator Greene suggested erring on side of diversion even if no economic market exists, citing example of Jersey's robust recycling due to legislation.

Committee members discussed the importance of regular meetings between recycling coordinators and transfer station operators to improve collaboration and reach state and county goals.

Comptroller Gallagher suggested engaging the community, while Vice-Chair Bartels emphasizes the importance of a local or regional landfill for residual waste.

Discussion revolved around the cost chart and the percentage of disposal, with Chair Baden suggesting including Amanda's chart and conclusion.

Discussion on waste management and reduction strategies for the Climate Act.

Vice-Chair Bartels suggested considering both short-term and long-term environmental impacts when deciding on a local or regional landfill.

Next Meetings: Thursday, August 1, 2024 @ 4:00 PM

Adjournment

Motion No. 1: MOTION TO ADJOURN

Motion Made By: Comptroller Gallagher

Motion Seconded By: Chair Baden

No. of Votes in Favor: 7

No. of Votes Against: 0

TIME: 4:39 PM

Respectfully submitted: Lizvett Bost, Legislative Administrative Assistant

Minutes Approved: August 1, 2024