

# Ulster County Legislature



## UC RRA Reform Committee

### Meeting Minutes

March 1, 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:** Vice-Chair Bartels

**LEGISLATIVE STAFF:** Lizvett Bost, Legislature Administrative Assistant

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

**ABSENT:** Chair Mike Baden

**QUORUM PRESENT:** Yes

**OTHER ATTENDEES:** Legislator Walls, Hewitt, UCRRA, Executive Director Marc Rider

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**Call Meeting to Order:** 9:47 AM

Vice-Chair Bartels called the meeting to order, with Legislator Manna Jo Greene requesting to markup minutes.

Vice-Chair Bartels proposed taking no action on the minutes and instead reaching out to committee members for feedback before the next meeting.

Vice-Chair Bartels acknowledged Newly appointed Executive Director UCRRA, Marc Rider, and thanks the board for the opportunity to work together.

Expert highlighted challenges with Ulster County's recycling program, including high contamination rates and uneven tip fees among neighboring counties.

Legislator Greene suggested charging for recyclables to cover costs, with potential for special fees for reuse projects.

Laura Petit expressed concern about the financial impact of charging for recycling, suggesting it may discourage people from recycling. UCRRA, Vice-Chair Jim Gordon agrees but wants to keep recycling as cheap as possible or free.

Vice-Chair Bartels expressed disappointment in the agency's move to charge for recycling, citing a lack of understanding of local waste management policies and numbers. She also expressed skepticism about the feasibility of a "magic number" for recycling, citing potential drawbacks and market forces as key considerations.

Legislator Greene suggested exploring regional waste processing facility to address capacity issues and expressed support for flow control on regulated recyclables after visiting a facility in Dutchess County.

Legislators discussed upgrading MRF and citing a landfill or incinerator, with potential job creation and grant funding opportunities.

Discussion on repairing and reusing items, with a focus on secondhand and thrift stores.

Vice-Chair Bartels expressed concern about the feasibility study's lack of detail on budget and specific aspects for pursuing a centralized facility.

Jim Gordon, Vice-Chair UCRRA agreed that a centralized location may not be popular in the community and suggests decentralizing reuse centers for better support.

Legislator Greene expressed frustration with feasibility studies for reuse Innovation Center, citing lack of recognition for transfer stations and need for flexibility in system.

Legislator Greene suggested adding a covered roll-off or equipment to facilitate reuse of materials at the transfer stations and proposed a spoken hub type of system, where reuse organizations pick up items at transfer stations or town halls on designated days, transporting them to a central facility for resale or disposal.

Laura Petit discussed a decentralized waste reduction system in Ulster County, NY, where local churches and pantries pick up materials from a hub and bring them to reuse centers.

Jim Gordon, Vice-Chair UCRRA noted the timing is ideal to explore this approach as the organization has finished paying off debt and is preparing for a new contract.

Vice-Chair Bartels discussed the importance of transfer stations in connecting with people and educating them on waste management issues.

Vice-Chair Bartels shared concern about legal liability issues and the potential for towns to be held responsible for items left at transfer stations.

Vice-Chair Bartels suggested centralizing reuse centers for transfer stations to reduce costs and improve accessibility.

Local officials discussed implementing a reuse innovation center with a "spoken hub" model, involving collaboration with transfer station attendants.

UCRRA, Executive Director Marc Rider suggested bringing together transfer stations and towns to address competition and improve recycling efforts.

Legislator Greene acknowledged the success of repair cafes but notes the need for support or a different approach to ensure their sustainability.

Laura Petit suggested tracking repairs and savings to secure funding and support for the program.

Vice-Chair Bartels proposed connecting UCRRA educators with local schools to collect materials for art projects, fostering community engagement and youth involvement.

Vice-Chair Bartels encouraged collaboration and creativity in repairing and reusing materials.

Towns are managing scrap metal on their own or with MSW, with some using separate containers and others not.

Vice-Chair Bartels expressed concern about scrap metal being handled inappropriately at transfer stations, with potential for fraud and revolution. Comptroller Gallagher agreed, highlighting internal control issues and the need for better oversight of scrap metal revenues.

Laura Petit expressed concerns about including scrap metal in the town's recycling program due to potential environmental issues and difficulty tracking cash transactions.

UCRRA, Vice Chair Gordon visited New Paltz and sees how they handle Freon in air conditioners, providing a positive example for other towns to learn from.

Comptroller Gallagher highlighted difficulty in measuring textile recycling.

Comptroller Gallagher suggested tracking drop-off locations to measure the volume of recyclable materials being collected and potentially incentivize more locations to participate.

Deputy County Executive LaValle highlighted the diversity of drop-off locations and the importance of understanding how they handle and reuse textiles, including the scale of their operations and the groups involved in the recycling process.

Vice-Chair Bartels highlighted the variety of ways companies are using recycled materials, including thrift stores and digital fires, and the potential for these efforts to offset agency costs.

The discussion also touched on the importance of education and addressing what is required to be removed from the system to improve recycling efforts.

Vice-Chair Bartels and Legislator Manna Greene discussed the need for a comprehensive waste diversion system in the county, including an annual report on waste handling and diversion rates.

Legislator Greene highlighted issues with textile recycling, including lack of central regulation and mismanagement of materials.

Laura Petit suggested quantifying textiles by analyzing larger big box stores and churches, while Vice-Chair Bartels and Comptroller Gallagher express concerns about the limitations of sampling data.

Vice-Chair Bartels and Comptroller Gallagher questioned the effectiveness of wish cycling and the need for more data to prove that recyclables are being recycled.

Vice-Chair Bartels expressed frustration with people throwing away shoes instead of repairing them and suggests acknowledging the issue in their recommendations.

The group discussed the difficulty of repairing tires, with UCCRA, Vice-Chair Gordon noting that they do not accept tires for repair.

Laura Petit discussed the challenges of disposing of tires, including their difficulty and expense.

The group discussed the state's surcharge on tire purchases, which is supposed to go towards education but only a small portion does.

State officials discussed potential solutions for tire recycling, including a "wash" model with upfront payment and back-end refund.

Legislator Greene expressed concern about report writing process.

Committee members discussed need for cross-cutting themes in report, with Legislator Greene suggesting different sections written by different members based on areas of expertise.

Comptroller Gallagher suggested streamlining report by cutting unnecessary sections and reorganizing material.

**Next Meetings:** Thursday, March 14, 2024 @ 9:30 AM  
Thursday, March 21, 2024 @ 9:30 AM

### **Adjournment**

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

**Motion Made By:** Comptroller Gallagher  
**Motion Seconded By:** Jim Gordon, Vice-Chair UCRRA  
**No. of Votes in Favor:** 6  
**No. of Votes Against:** 0

TIME: 11:13 AM

**Respectfully submitted:** Lizvett Bost, Legislative Administrative Assistant  
**Minutes Approved:** April 4, 2024