

**Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC)  
Chief Administrative Officers Subcommittee on Recycling Meeting  
Summary Minutes of February 14, 2022**

The Chief Administrative Officers (CAO) Subcommittee on Recycling Meeting was called to order at 11:45 AM by Chris Price at the offices of the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission located at 723 Woodlake Drive in Chesapeake. The following members of the CAO Subcommittee on Recycling were in attendance:

Patrick Roberts, attending on Chip Filer's behalf	Norfolk
David Freeman, attending on Cindy Rohlf's behalf	Newport News
Randy Keaton	Isle of Wight County
Scott Stevens	James City County
Chris Price	Chesapeake

**Appointed Locality Representatives in Attendance:**

Jason Brown, Chesapeake  
Earl Sorey, Chesapeake  
Sherry Kosakowski, Gloucester  
Jason Mitchell, Hampton  
Michael Etheridge, Isle of Wight  
Cassie Cordova, James City County  
Amy K. Gray, Newport News  
Pat Roberts, Norfolk  
David Magnant, VPPSA  
Trey Burke, Portsmouth  
Vacant, Southampton  
Robert Lewis, Suffolk  
Vacant, Surry  
LJ Hansen, Virginia Beach  
Rob Krieger, York County

**Others in Attendance:**

Robert Crum, HRPDC  
Greg Grootendorst, HRPDC  
Katie Cullipher, HRPDC  
John Harbin, HRPDC  
Rebekah Eastep, HRPDC  
Wayne Jones, Suffolk

**Approval of Agenda**

Chris Price asked for any modifications of the agenda. None were offered and the agenda was deemed approved.

## **Southeast Recycling Development Council**

Will Sagar, Executive Director of the Southeast Recycling Development Council (SERDC), presented information on regional recycling trends, examples of localities collaborating on recycling services, and best practices for efficient and effective recycling services. He explained that recycling commodity markets are robust, despite news reports portraying otherwise as markets have adjusted to China's National Sword policy. While markets are strong, they continue to face an inelastic supply that results in price volatility that can make long-term contracts with vendors challenging. He noted that recycling is increasingly important to the regional economy as hundreds of manufacturers located in the southeast require material from local recycling programs as part of the feedstock for manufacturing processes. When there is not enough material available in the region, they are forced to import it from other parts of the country. Despite the strong markets and economic importance of recycling, Mr. Sagar acknowledged that multiple challenges remain, including contamination of single-stream recycling, fragmented messaging, limited access to recycling programs, processing fee increases, and limited local government budgets. As more companies and brands commit to including recycled content in packaging, recycling markets, infrastructure, and programs will further develop. Proposed federal and state legislation has the potential of driving market development as well. Mr. Sagar discussed how regional collaboration with respect to recycling efforts presents the best long-term opportunity to increase the efficacy of recycling, reduce the cost of recycling, and increase competition for recycling vendors.

Subcommittee members asked various questions of Mr. Sagar, including average contamination rates of single-stream recycling, a common pricing structure for vendors, average processing costs per ton, and the likelihood of attracting another MRF to the region. Mr. Sagar noted that average contamination rates of single-stream recycling vary, but typically range from 15-25%. There are various pricing structures, but a best practice is to separate the collection and processing of recyclables and charge a flat fee per household for collection and a per-ton fee for processing. The average processing cost per ton varies by location and additional information on this will be provided. Mr. Sagar noted that several localities could jointly issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) or Request for Information (RFI) to solicit interest in bringing a new material recovery facility (MRF) to the region.

## **Regional Collaboration Discussion**

LJ Hansen noted that the region suffers from one MRF that provides subpar service at a high cost and bringing in new vendors and/or an MRF would increase competition. Mr. Price said Chesapeake is looking into alternative vendors that are not currently operating in the region. Scott Stevens noted that bringing down costs is key, but so is building consumer faith in the recycling process so that residents can trust what they put in the bins is actually recycled and not landfilled. David Magnant said that the contamination rate for the Virginia Peninsulas Public Service Authority's (VPPSA) communities with single-stream recycling is approximately 22%. He also noted that VPPSA has made attempts to attract a new MRF to the region in past years but has not received any interest from possible vendors. Mr. Price suggested a regional RFP/RFI for a new MRF be discussed with the full CAO Committee. Mr.

Stevens responded that doing so would be low-risk and not require any locality to terminate existing contracts. Randy Keaton noted that utilizing a source-separated collection system would eliminate the need for an MRF altogether and allow for direct sales to end markets.

The Subcommittee then discussed each of the five initial inquiries for regional collaboration on recycling.

1. Review of residential contracting best practices and potential coordination on recycling contracts.

Chris Price said that a first step to coordinating recycling contracts for each locality could be to align contract start and end dates and that Chesapeake would be willing to do so. Amy Gray noted that the current recycling contract for Newport News is different than most peer localities and stressed the importance of negotiating better terms and conditions in a contract for the locality. She also noted that an MRF located in Hampton was recently converted to a transfer station due to the labor-intensive processes required to operate an MRF. Mr. Price said that with one MRF in the region, collaborating on contracts would provide additional negotiating leverage to the participating localities. Mr. Hansen suggested exploring regional subscription service contracts as well. Earl Sorey noted that there is a traditional curbside subscription service that utilizes the same bins and trucks that most residents are accustomed to and newer, start-up subscription services that use smaller bags and collection vehicles. Scott Stevens said that James City County has successfully implemented a subscription-based curbside recycling service utilizing traditional bins and trucks. Pat Roberts said contracts should include provisions to ensure and enforce a clean stream of recyclables by conducting audits of bins, tagging contaminated bins with violation notices, and possibly suspending service for households with repeated violations. Mr. Price noted that Chesapeake has offered to conduct more outreach and education to residents in an effort to clean the stream and reduce contamination in exchange for lower fees from their current vendor, but the vendor has been unwilling to negotiate.

2. Universal regional messaging and outreach to educate residents on what and how to recycle.
3. Determining a consistent set for recyclables across the region.

Mr. Price said there appears to be widespread support for determining a set of accepted recyclables in vendor contracts that can be promoted in regional messaging and outreach. Mr. Roberts noted that the onus to communicate to residents on what and how to recycle should be placed on the vendor. Mr. Price responded that the traditional vendors in the region do not conduct enough outreach and education and as a result, it falls on the localities. Katie Cullipher said that a set of recyclables and regional messaging has been developed with input from locality staff but that adoption of it remains a challenge. Ms. Cullipher suggested that unified support from the CAOs for regional recycling messages would increase adoption and

implementation by local staff. David Freeman suggested the regional message include labels or stickers placed directly on recycling bins. Cassie Cordova said that regional messaging should also address how recycling works in the region to build confidence and trust in the service. Robert Lewis suggested that regional messaging include educating residents on purchasing products that have less packaging to begin with.

4. Determining the feasibility of regional convenience centers.
5. Determining the viability of other recycling options.

Jason Mitchell said that the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) denied a request by Hampton that waste sent to a local waste-to-energy plant be considered recycling and that the group may consider this as another recycling option and seek DEQ permission. Mr. Keaton noted that staffed convenience centers that utilize source separation can create unpleasant situations between staff that advise residents on what they can and cannot recycle.

### **Public Comment**

Mr. Price stated that no public comments were submitted and no members of the public were present.

### **Next Steps**

Mr. Price said the members of the subcommittee reached a consensus on the following:

1. Adopt universal, regional messaging and outreach to educate residents on what and how to recycle, including a uniform, regional list of what is accepted in residential programs
2. Develop educational material to build public trust in recycling effectiveness
3. Review contracting best practices and explore a regional or model contract
4. Consider a joint RFP/RFI to attract a new MRF in the region

### **Other Business**

No other business was discussed.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the CAO Recycling Subcommittee, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:30 PM.