

## COE agenda 10-7-15

### **Non-recyclable plastics**

-I spoke with a representative from Trex, and they informed me that only certain plastics are accepted for their composite lumber. Beyond that, she was unable to give me specifics, but gave me a number to the recycling coordinator. I am waiting for a call back to ask about what they accept and reject. The representative did say that there were no programs or initiatives that she knew of that would try to reclaim non-recyclable plastics from Materials Recovery Facilities, like the Waste Management facility in Elkridge. I will try again to contact the recycling coordinator and also Waste Management to see if they are proposing any plan to avoid throwing that plastic into landfills.

### **Green Team**

-I spoke with Mike Hunninghake, the Program Manager for Sustainable MD. He will be working with Professor Muchnick of St. Mary's College to organize a presentation for students and interested community members. This will be an opportunity to recruit these individuals to join the Green Team for Leonardtown, but will also give an opportunity for students with homes throughout MD to see if they live in an eligible municipality that is in need of certification.

### **Long Range Transportation Plan**

-Bill put me in contact with the Senior Planning Specialist for DLUGM, and they provided me with a digital questionnaire in PDF format that I can fill out and send back. If any are interested, email me and I can pass along the form.

### **Solar Panels**

-Gordon sent out a link on solar panels before the last meeting, but somehow I missed it. It discusses the push to have solar fields, but the fear of this movement slowing due to a reduction in tax credits for commercial and utility-scale solar operations (30% to 10%) and the elimination of the residential solar tax credit (something to nothing) if Congress does not extend the federal investment tax credits for solar power beyond 2016. I agree with Mike's response, and I believe the residential solar tax credit may be of more importance in the long run, as cost will go down for large operations that are already moving more towards solar, but residents would still benefit from the financial incentive.

### **Small waterways regulation**

-Mike sent out a link about a federal judge in North Dakota that prevented the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers from regulating some waterways according to the Clean Water Act. It seems most of the push is coming from farmers complaining that the Act, intended to regulate waterways that may be polluting larger bodies of water, may find irrigation and drainage on farms worth regulating. It seems to me that if these farmers are not actually polluting nearby waterways with their drainage, they should have no reason to be concerned, but the farmers that know they are irresponsibly handling chemicals and runoff have reason to be worried. Maryland is not one of the 13 states that were exempted from the Act, because we did not sue the federal government, so it will be interesting to see if Maryland farmers find anything wrong with the intentions of the Clean Water Act as it is now in place.

### **Composting Workshop**

-Sue sent out a link for a composting workshop that was scheduled to take place this past weekend in Charles County. I am not sure if it was cancelled due to weather, but if not, I would be curious to hear how it went. If we hear positive feedback, would we be interested in hosting a similar workshop in our county at some point? Or any other workshops?

### **Board of Appeals Environmental Cases**

-Sue was asked if we would be interested in testifying in Critical Area variance cases before the Board of Appeals. I will let her explain more about what this entails, and then we can discuss whether or not we have the interest.

### **Food Waste**

-Gordon sent out some links on reducing food waste, and this is an important topic. Composting can be a helpful way to reduce the waste stream going into landfills, but it is very unlikely that we will be able to handle all

of the compostable material in our area at a single facility. Rather, it is important to identify examples of preventable food waste and to be more mindful of our individual habits. The articles provide some great tips for preventing food from going to waste in your own home. I will be attending the Maryland Food Charter Statewide Summit on October 15<sup>th</sup> and will report back with my notes of the event at the next meeting, which will include discussions about how to decrease the food waste in our state.

### **Composting facility**

-I spoke with a representative from the Bureau of Environmental Services in Howard County that handles the operations of the composting facility located at the Alpha Ridge Landfill. As far as tours go, we can either pick a weekday or a Saturday. He mentioned that his October Saturdays were unavailable, as are my own. He mentioned that November 7<sup>th</sup> would work for him, so we will discuss whether we would like to take a tour then or if another time is preferable.

As for the operations, he said that they contract out a hauler to collect residential food waste and yard clippings as well as that from schools along the routes. Next year, they will only be accepting waste in paper yard bags, as they are no longer going to allow plastic into their facility. He said that the fall leaf boom causes storage problems on their small site, and because yard clippings and food waste are mixed presently, they do not have the option to let it sit dormant. They also do not have the ability as of yet to expand into the commercial food waste market, citing phone calls from onion processors and Edible Arrangements alone producing too much for them to handle. He also explained that commercial comes with a great deal of contamination. Residential composters tend to be more diligent in their separation, but restaurants seem less empathetic about what they throw in if it is not properly monitored. He mentioned a place near Pittsburgh that is doing a good job of working with restaurants to collect food waste, so I will be researching this further.

It seemed from our extensive talk that taking a year or two to collect brown feedstock, such as leaves, grass, and Christmas trees, may be helpful in the initiation phases, and that transitioning slowly is important; for instance, starting with residential pick-up before taking on the commercial food waste stream. All of these numbers need to be assessed to ensure that the facility does not get in over its head, but it is also important to note that there will be bumps along the way and that this should be seen as an evolving project. Compost is not a lucrative business, but rather a necessary part of solid waste stream divergence that can reduce costs to the county if done properly. Now the research begins...