

APPROVED
CHITTENDEN SOLID WASTE DISTRICT
ZOOM MEETING/Williston Central School
November 1, 2022 – MRF Bond Vote Public Hearing

PRESENT

STAFF:

Amy Jewell
Jen Holliday
Michele Morris
Jon Dorwart
Alise Certa

Member of the Public PRESENT: 6 total participants (4 via Zoom, 2 in Person)

Meeting Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nw95ZYQDjG4>

AGENDA:

1. Agenda
2. MRF Presentation by CSWD Staff
3. Q&A Period
4. MRF Presentation II
5. Q&A Period II
6. CSWD Videos, "Get to Know CSWD" and "Touring the MRF"
7. Q&A Session III
8. Final Comments & Close of Meeting

1. **AGENDA** M. Morris opens the presentation of the public hearing for the CSWD MRF Bond Vote. This public hearing was required by CSWD's charter and was open to the public in person at Williston Central School, and live online via Zoom and CCTV's YouTube channel. Five members of the public were in attendance; audience members were asked to hold questions or mute their microphones until the end of the presentation.

2. **MRF PRESENTATION BY CSWD STAFF:**

M. Morris began the presentation by outlining the role of CSWD as a municipality in waste reduction management, education, and stewardship. She also outlined the current status of the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) and its challenges as a facility. Among the challenges of the current MRF highlighted were its limited space to serve the growing Chittenden County; outdated or limited machinery which leads to lesser quality recyclables; and unpleasant working conditions for staff in the facility.

Looking at the proposed new MRF, M. Morris shared the outline of the proposed building on Redmond Road in Williston. The new proposed facility is forty percent larger, which CSWD estimates will help us keep pace with the recycling needs of a growing Chittenden County for the next thirty years. Additionally, an expanded facility will enable CSWD to procure and use up to date equipment, including optical sorters and eddy currents; as well as longer conveyers for easier and better sorting of materials, and more flexibility of materials accepted. Finally, an expanded facility will allow all baled recyclables to remain indoors, improving their quality for sale on the marketplace.

A new MRF facility will also feature improvements in working conditions for the employees with the same number of jobs available. There is projected opportunities for new, higher skilled positions as well.

A final benefit of the new MRF facility is improved environmental benefits, including further preservation of limited natural resources through recycling and further reduction of Vermont's carbon footprint.

Finally in the presentation, M. Morris reviewed the proposed finances of the new MRF. CSWD will be asking the VT Municipal Bond Bank for \$16M, the Closed Loop Fund for a \$6M zero-interest loan, and will be contributing \$3.5M cash on hand. CSWD will be applying for EPA grant funding and a grant from the Recycling Partnership for \$500 thousand. The \$22M in loans will be paid back over 25 years through MRF operational revenue.

Community members interested in voting for this facility can access their ballot in one of three ways: Online via the My Voter Page, mvp.vermont.gov; ballots can be picked up or requested at any town Chittenden County town clerk's office; ballots will be available at all Chittenden County polling places on Tuesday, November 8th.

3. Q&A SESSION I –

A) Peter Saile, Burlington: "How are you guys going to deal with the problems associated with plastics? My wife and I both recycle as much as we can, we compost- we've got a pretty good grasp of things, but what I've been reading is that plastics are an absolute nightmare for a facility like a MRF. Certainly, given that the markets aren't there anymore, with the close of Malaysian and Chinese markets; what sort of revenue do you expect to get or hope to receive with the plastics situation? In your talk, you mentioned we need to do more to get people to recycle, but it seems to me that this is a real elephant in the room, and somehow I just don't feel good about recycling plastic now. Ultimately and hopefully plastics don't get landfilled because there are no markets"

- a. Response: First, it's important to note that CSWD's mission and the things we emphasize are the three 'R's' – reduce, reuse, and recycle. We always advocate first and foremost for reduction and reusing, especially when it comes to single use plastics. However, recycling still has a role to play. Plastics can be a challenge, but one of the reasons for MRF specifications including rigid, single use containers is that these plastics are still in high demand and have high value. The CSWD MRF recyclables do not get shipped overseas- they either stay in the US, or at furthest in North America (Canada). 93% of materials that come to the MRF are being recycled; right now the 7% being tossed are always trash or just too dirty

Peter Saile, Burlington: "I appreciate the response, and it's certainly good to know. My comment would be that in order for people to stay abreast of current acceptance items, they really should look at the website and find out there or call. It's great to get a live person on the phone to get responses to questions."

B) Peter Saile, Burlington: "I find this topic extremely interesting, and I would recommend for everyone to go visit the MRF, certainly the current MRF and the new one when it gets built. I have done that and it's a fascinating window when you put things into your blue box and where they go. I think it's an absolutely essential thing, and a wonderful opportunity we have that we can put things out in a box and the city picks it up. I'm really encouraged and excited by this aspect."

- a. Response: "Thank you for bringing up tours, which are a great resource. To request a tour, residents can email info@cswd.net, or by reaching out to outreach coordinators."

C) Question: Will you assess fees from resident towns for the new MRF?

- a. Response: "Our intention is definitely not to access towns new fees for the MRF. The only time we've assessed member towns was in 1992 when the district was initially organized; we intend to get all the funding we can through zero interest loans, grants, and revenue and not have any of the burden fall on the member towns."

4. MRF PRESENTATION II

Given available time, M. Morris shares the presentation again for anyone who joined the call, audience, or livestream later.

5. Q&A SESSION II

- A) Rachel Elliott, Burlington & Community News Service: "I am wondering if you can talk about any expected impacts this facility will have on the land and air quality in the surrounding areas of the new MRF."
 - a. Response, "The first step in the process of building a new MRF is an environmental review. CSWD has been working closely with the building designers, the State of Vermont, and the Town of Williston to ensure that our new facility meets Act 250 and other environmental permitting requirements. The site for the proposed MRF was chosen in part because it had previously been zoned for industrial use enjoys a long ingress/ egress roadway. You can find detailed information on the construction timeline in our MRF FAQ sheet, available online at <https://cswd.net/mrf-bond/>"

6. CSWD VIDEOS: "GET TO KNOW CSWD" & MRF TOUR

CSWD showed two videos to the public at this hearing. The first video is an introduction to the work done at CSWD, while the second video is a tour of the current MRF facility. This video was recorded six or seven years ago, but no substantial changes have been made in the years since, with the exception of some machine repairs and replacement.

7. Q&A SESSION III

- A) Peter Saile, Burlington: "I found those videos very informative and they prompted me to ask two questions. First, I believe that black plastic is not accepted in the blue bins because of its difficulty in recycling it. Is that because of the dye used to make it black? Is this true of all black plastic materials; for example, patio furniture? Second, I read an article about PFOAs being found in compost. I wonder if CSWD tests for that in compost and if not, are there measures coming up to do that?"
 - a) Response: "We'll answer each question separately. First, for PFOAs. Since this meeting is to focus on questions related to the MRF and that is how it was warned for the public, we will address only questions about the MRF and recycling. If you would like to send the question about compost directly to us via email or our website we will be happy to address it. For now, I will say one of the difficulties in discussing PFOAs is that they are everywhere in the environment and even in our bodies.
 - For recycling black plastic: "Regarding black plastic, you are correct that we don't want that at the MRF. There are many reasons black plastic is problematic. If you think about how the MRF works the whole point is to separate and sort different types of materials into like single- item streams. What we know is that all those milk jugs are made from the same type of plastic, we know that water and beverage bottles are made from different plastics than milk jugs - those things don't want to be mixed; so the job of the MRF is to separate. The issue with black plastic is that the only thing they have in common is their color, but they can be made from completely different types of plastic polymers. Neither people nor optical sorters can tell the difference

between the polymers of different black plastic items. An additional issue is the fillers put into black plastics. The solution is to work upstream to reduce the use of black plastic, which CSWD is doing by focusing on extended producer responsibility.

- B) Rachel Elliot, Burlington: “I was wondering what the impact of the new MRF will be on consumer fees where residents pay for recycling. Will that change and if so, how?”
- a. Response: “In Burlington, the city picks up recycling and residents pay for recycling as part of their taxes, with the city deciding how much cost burden to shift to residents. CSWD plays no role in that. In another town in Chittenden County the town contracts with one hauling company, and the residents pay for that through taxes. In all other towns in Chittenden County businesses and residents must contract with a private hauling company to pick up their recycling. That hauling company chooses what costs they pass on to the consumer. Currently, the fee these hauling companies are charged is \$80/ton. We set the tip fee to cover the gap between revenue received from the sale of recycling and remaining expenses. Private hauling companies factor in the tip fee at the MRF , along with other expenses like labor, marketing, insurance, equipment, fuel and that sort of thing in deciding how much cost to shift to customers. CSWD’s goal is to keep the tip fee steady to the extent possible. The model we are working from is one in which the tipping fee remains at a ten-year average of \$80/ton. This was based on a conservative in-bound tonnage and twelve other variables; the details of which can be found in the CSWD Board of Commissioners July 22, 2022 minutes on www.cswd.net.”
- C) Jen Holliday, CSWD Staff & Hinesburg Resident: “I wanted to share an observation and comment about the videos we showed. I haven’t seen those in quite some time and it struck me how many people are featured hand-sorting in the MRF video. Currently, if you visit the MRF you’ll see far less employees; sometimes zero employees on the fiber line in a shift. That is one of the many, many reasons we need a new facility with better equipment. It is difficult to get and keep staff at the current MRF, and our current machines aren’t equipped to do the separation or quality control we need to improve our baled recyclables.”

8. FINAL COMMENTS & CLOSE OF MEETING

Staff closed the meeting at 7:00pm, thanking the participants from the community for their time and questions. They reminded community members that CSWD was not allowed to mail ballots to voters under the new VT election laws, ballots are still available through My Voter Page, their local town clerks, and at the polling places on Tuesday, November 8th. Further questions and resources can be found at the CSWD website, <https://cswd.net/mrf-bond/>