

*Note: These minutes are not official until approved by the Zero Waste Task Force at a subsequent meeting. Please refer to the meeting minutes when these minutes are approved to obtain any changes to these minutes.*

DeKalb County Government  
Sycamore, Illinois

**Zero Waste Task Force Minutes  
December 5, 2013**

The Zero Waste Task Force met on Thursday, December 5, 2013 at 1:15 pm in Conference Room West of the County Outreach Building. 2550 N. Annie Glidden Road. In attendance were Zero Task Force Members Steve Challgren, Connie Handel, Mike Hey, Marc Johnson, John Laskowski, Greg Maurice, Roy Plote, Jerry Smith, and Christel Springmire. Task Force members absent: John Emerson, Deirdre Davis, Ken Koch and Rick Olson. DeKalb County Health Department staff present: Cindy Capek and Jane Lux.

**Approval of Agenda**

Jerry Smith moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Marc Johnson, and the motion carried unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes**

Christel Springmire moved to approve the minutes of the November 7, 2013 meeting, seconded by Greg Maurice. The motion carried unanimously.

**Old Business**

Cindy Capek distributed the Task Force Meeting Schedule through August of 2014. She noted that the consensus of the group was to meet the first Thursday of each month with the exception of January and July; at which time the meetings will be held on the second Thursday. She asked that the Task Force review the schedule for any major conflicts. If necessary, the Task Force could schedule additional meetings to complete its' work.

**New Business**

The Task Force membership roster and contact information was distributed. Each member was asked to review the material and make any corrections, additions or deletions. A revised roster would be provided to the membership.

The majority of the Task Force completed Open Meetings Training. A copy of the certificate of completion should be submitted to Cindy.

At the request of the Task Force, Christel Springmire provided several slides relative to waste composition and landfilling rates. The first slide was a pie chart depicting the percent of different materials that can be found at a landfill. The data was obtained from 7-8 landfills who tracked the composition of the material. Christel noted that DeKalb's breakdown of material would be similar to the state data and that two of the items paper and plastic could be recycled

very easily. Organics was another opportunity for recycling. The question was raised as to the meaning of C&D. It was noted that this refers to construction and demolition debris such as shingles and wood. Christel explained that state contracts now require recycling of construction and demolition items. Marc commented that the amount of recycling increases during peak construction as well as higher landfill usage.

The second slide was a graph of residential waste composition for urban areas, rural areas, and statewide. DeKalb is considered to be rural. One of the barriers mentioned to recycling was that rural areas do not have curbside recycling. The next graph contained similar information but it was in a different format.

The final slide depicted landfilling rates from 2005-2012 for DeKalb County by pounds per person per day. The 2012 rate was a little more than four pounds for all DeKalb County residents. This includes NIU and is not exclusive to one landfill since municipalities decide on who they wish to contract for waste removal. In unincorporated areas that do not have negotiated franchise fees the resident pays a fee to hauler for waste removal.

Jerry Smith asked the question if the Task Force was concerned about which landfill was receiving the waste; Christel responded this was not a consideration. The focus was on reducing waste. The four pounds included businesses and construction waste but excluded certain hazardous material such as medical waste. Christel commented that if we could reduce this amount by thirty percent we would see marked improvements. The average American throws away about 4.4 pounds of waste per day. Although DeKalb is slightly under this rate; there are many communities who have much lower rates. Lastly, Christel said that the charts were available electronically. They will be emailed to the committee.

Cindy reviewed the mission and goals of the Task Force and explained that the meeting framework to accomplish these goals. Each meeting the Task Force would review sections of the Existing Solid Waste Plan and discuss opportunities for incorporating zero waste concepts into existing tasks or possibly adding new tasks. These opportunities will be compiled, evaluated and prioritized prior to the development of any recommendations to the County Board.

The Task Force was charged with reviewing Tasks 13, 14 and 1 of the Solid Waste Plan. Staff was asked to lead the discussion of the tasks. Christel explained that Task 13: Monitoring of Existing Disposal Capacity- This included an annual report prepared for the IEPA as well as the County Board. She said that the media generally covered this report, that it was available on the website and that although this was not a zero waste policy issue; it would be beneficial to increase the recycling rate each year. She would also like to add landfill rates to future reports since this was easier to understand. Although capacity reporting is important; actual rates would be a good way to measure the success of waste reduction efforts. Christel explained that since DeKalb is rural; landfills were the best options for waste that could not be recycled.

Mike Hey said that it was important to have a score card to measure success and that utilizing a pounds per person measurement of waste deposited to the landfill was a good measure. He suggested goals should be established and that people need to buy into the concept of recycling.

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Marc Johnson felt that the community was more in tune to this issue because of the previous discussions which centered on the landfill expansion. Jerry Smith questioned if staff was comfortable with current media relations. Staff explained that they generally use press releases to inform the public and that the paper and radio were supportive of the press releases. Jerry suggested that promotional efforts might be enhanced to educate the public and asked if it would be worthwhile to have a public information officer within the county structure. Marc Johnson said that this was a good idea; however implementation was a larger county matter. Funding would also need to be considered.

Thereafter, a number of ideas were discussed to include the following: utilizing utility bills to post recycling messages every six months, promotion on annual tax bills, community or neighborhood challenges, and working with waste haulers to post announcements on bills, automated phone messages, increased visibility at public events, website promotion, and educational opportunities. Steve Challgren said that we need to be sensitive to the fact that measurements and improvements are important; but the public is also concerned about how programs impact them personally.

Connie Handel was asked to provide an overview of the school outreach programs. She explained that she worked with all of the elementary schools in DeKalb and that the teachers set up times with her to provide lessons to their classrooms. There is a different lesson plan for each grade and she visits each classroom three times. In kindergarten the children are introduced to recycling and there after concepts are expanded to include discussions of the landfill at the fifth grade level. Approximately 5,000 student contacts were made last year. She explained that there was little opportunity for evaluation by any post classroom surveys but noted that when she had repetitive school instruction; several students would comment on instituting recycling in their homes.

Cindy summarized the discussions and challenged the Task Force to develop ideas for promotion, to identify our target audience, to think about incentives that would drive success and lastly to create opportunities for increased education for all ages.

Task 14: Final Disposal Task was reviewed. The County Board approved expansion of the landfill resulting in this task being completed. The topic of other pollution control facilities and operations remains a possibility and we should always be forward thinking. There are other technologies currently available as well as those on the horizon. Some include incinerators, digesters, and cookers. Mark Eddington, Executive Director of the DeKalb Sanitary District was in the audience and offered information. He explained that the Sanitary District has four anaerobic digesters for organic solids to convert them to methane. They are also investigating the use of food scrap waste to produce methane to reduce energy costs. At the last meeting it was brought to the attention of the Task Force that Nestle Corporation has adopted a Zero Waste policy for their operations. As the task force moves forward consideration should be given to opportunities that are available for partnerships as well as education.

Task 1: Public Information and Promotion: This task was incorporated into the earlier discussions. Jerry Smith asked if the Task Force was initiated every five years with the

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development of a new Solid Waste Plan. Marc Johnson said no, that the Task Force was due to independent steps and happened to coincide with the development period for a solid waste plan. Staff was asked about the level of completion of the current plan. Christel said it would be fair to assume that 60% of the tasks have been completed, while others have stayed the course. Some tasks may have higher or lesser levels of completion which are generally tied to resources available. Christel said she would like the ability to create a list serve to provide timely information to the public such as electronics recycling, and other opportunities. Mike Hey commented that often the public is blind to information until it affects them. An example would be television sets that are left out and illegal dumping of tires and other material.

Cindy noted that numerous ideas surfaced throughout the meeting and that the Task Force should review the minutes and develop additional recommendations for these tasks. She wanted to reinforce the concept that the Task Force should not be driven by staff perspectives but incorporate the ideas of the entire group as well as evaluate resources in the community.

Mike Hey said that in his experience every solid waste plan in the state has had an education component. We do not need to convince people that recycling is the right thing to do but we need to make it convenient to fit into everyday life. We started with no recycling, then curbside recycling followed requiring the separation of materials, washing and cleaning, and separate bins; today we can comingle all material. He cited several trends to include food waste recycling and industry standards which require new packaging to restrict size as well as composition of the package.

The question was raised about incentives for recycling. Mark Johnson said he has seen some examples, Christel mentioned "Pay as You Throw", and Mike talked about incentives based on volume for households or neighborhoods utilizing a rewards program for things like gift cards, movie admissions and more. Waste Management has an incentive program. The concept of establishing goals and challenges could be explored. There was some discussion on a fee based trash disposal system with regard to patrolling waste and illegal dumping.

Several challenges for consideration were raised. A primary concern was the fact that unincorporated areas of DeKalb do not have curbside recycling available as well as multi-unit housing complexes (more than four units). Several years ago the County experimented by offering recycling to three Section 8 housing complexes. They had no success with two of them, with more involvement with a senior citizen housing complex. Upon completion of the program, none of the landlords choose to fund the program on their own. Staff found a lot of comingling of trash and little support for the program despite extensive education.

The Task Force briefly discussed cultural issues, whether commercial accounts should be required to provide recycling by ordinance, and the challenges of changing behavior.

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**Persons to Be Heard from the Floor**

Cindy Capek distributed two emails that she received on behalf of the Task Force. She explained that future agenda's will have an opportunity to review correspondence noting these items can be reviewed in January.

Gillian King-Cargile introduced herself, Communications Coordinator for the Division of Outreach, Engagement and Information Technologies, NIU. Also attending was Sandra Streed, Senior Research Associate for the Center for Governmental Studies, NIU and Dan Kenney. She wanted to inform the Zero Waste Task Force of a project they were partnering on involving composting of plant material from several of the DeKalb restaurants for use on the community gardens. Several restaurants are very supportive of the program. NIU will be working on the development of the program this spring with implementation in the fall. The goal is to start off small.

Christel Springmire commented that she thought the downtown restaurants shared a dumpster and did not contract individually for trash removal. Marc Johnson asked if there would be interest by NIU to engage in its own Zero Waste Policy. Gillian thought that there would be interest and explained that NIU could be a resource for the Zero Waste Task Force for publicity, education, surveys, and policy development.

Mark Eddington of the DeKalb Sanitary District shared his visit to Purdue University to learn about their dining program. Students do not use trays and the leftovers are composted. Dan Kenney said Illinois State University also composts food.

**Adjournment**

Roy Plote moved to adjourn, second by Marc Johnson at 2:47 pm. The next meeting will be held on January 9, 2014, 1:15 pm, in Conference Room West of the County Outreach Building, 2550 N. Annie Glidden Road. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cindy Capek  
Zero Waste Task Force Facilitator