

Michigan Recycling Coalition 9-11-06 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

In Attendance

Cara Clore, Committee Chair, Clinton County
Kelly Johnston, MRC Policy Director
Steve Chalker, City of Lansing
Mike Csapo, RRRASOC

Recycling Caucus Development

Kelly provided an outline of implementation steps and a draft of the letter inviting targeted lawmakers to participate as co-chairs of the caucus. Once the Caucus development has been reviewed by the MRC Board, letters will be mailed, likely by January. The purpose of the Caucus is to create a bipartisan, bicameral group of legislators to foster a dialog among leading policy makers and industry leaders about recycling efforts in Michigan.

Recycling 101

Kelly presented the first draft of "Recycling 101" an informational document that will be sent to newly elected legislators in January. Committee members reviewed the document and a number of suggestions were made. Kelly and Cara will incorporate the changes and further develop the document for review at the next meeting.

Membership Survey

The group reviewed a second draft of the survey to collect data on the economic contributions made by MRC members, for use in communications to the legislature. The survey will be sent in October. The number of responses will determine how useful the effort is.

Nov. 3 Workshop

The November 3 workshop was discussed, specifically content for the policy portion slated for late morning. A suggestion was made to request members allow MRC to share their contact information with the legislature as part of an on-going effort to increase communication between lawmakers and the membership on recycling and solid waste issues. Cara discussed what Steve Sliver, DEQ-WHMD, was asked to present relative to the updated draft solid waste policy. This includes how they expect the policy will be enacted, how the revised policy differs from the current one, what types of implementation activities will be necessary to make the policy successful and how it links to solid waste planning. The group recommended a panel discussion policy work group members to follow Mr. Sliver's discussion and identified potential candidates. Questions could include any concerns they may have had going into the process, how they were addressed, any remaining concerns and potential opportunities that would result if the policy were implemented.

Monthly Communications to Legislators

In light of the fact that lawmakers are not in office until after the November 7 election, the monthly communications will start towards the end of the month. Potential topics include the policy brief under development on the need to approach solid waste management decisions using full cost accounting methods, a call for action to adopt the updated draft solid waste policy and the economic contributions made by the MRC membership.

Other items of note:

Cara mentioned that she has tried on number of occasions to reach various members of the Michigan Environmental Council to discuss their getting involved in the MRC's policy activities, starting with the Director, James Clift the Policy Director and a program manager. No one has returned calls.

Mike discussed RRRASOC's current planning efforts and noted that economic development opportunities for recycling are often related to property development.

Mike also suggested that MRC/Policy Committee develop a list of issues to advocate on a macro level e.g. advocate for more funding at state level, recognize various means for providing funding at state level and the need to conduct the appropriate economic analysis which is necessary to determine effective strategies that inform policy development and share with lawmakers. Essentially, we need to create a defensible strategy for investing in recycling. This is particularly true when examining the efficacy of a surcharge. Mike notes that he has never been against a surcharge purse, but has not supported the fact that very little study has been done to determine what amount is appropriate, and furthermore given the variance in the waste and recycling infrastructure around the state, a uniform surcharge may not make sense, but in fact it may be appropriate for it to be regional or facility (landfill) specific. The challenges are to identify the appropriate economic analysis to come up with the appropriate surcharge amounts, and then determine a fair and equitable distribution formula.

What is the methodology? It starts by looking at the externalities that result, and then determining how best to compensate for that. Mike referenced a past newsletter article on the surcharge issue and his suggestion to identify classes for which landfills should fall to set the surcharge amount.

Educate the legislature that the challenge with the surcharge is in determining how the amount has been set.

Frustration with MEC/Ecology center advocating policy by not getting input from program managers or "natural allies"

How do we create more meaningful dialog and work with MEC and Ecology Center?