

Chapter 7

Implementing Entity Leadership and Commitment

To implement the recommendations of the Municipal Waste Management Plan, Cumberland County must commit adequate financial support and resources. A sufficient number of qualified personnel, facilities and equipment are crucial to administer the plan and provide the services deemed necessary during the planning process. Because the Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling and Waste Reduction Act (Act 101) shifted the authority for municipal waste management planning from the municipalities to the counties, the responsibility of local jurisdictions is often overlooked. However, municipalities must still retain a vital role in promoting recycling and enforcing proper waste management practices. Cumberland County recognizes the importance of working together with all of its municipalities to ensure that its environmental goals and objectives can be accomplished. Therefore, part of the planning process focused on ways to meet the unique needs in varying communities but still ensure consistency on the waste management opportunities made available to all residents. This chapter discusses the organizational structure and budgetary needs necessary to accomplish the Plan's mission.

HISTORICAL IMPLEMENTATION

The Solid Waste Authority of Cumberland County (renamed Cumberland County Recycling & Waste Authority) was created in 1975. As part of the original Plan, the County designated certain responsibilities to the Authority through a September 1991 Delegation Agreement. The delegation agreement authorized the Authority to secure financing and enter into contracts, and propose plans, budgets, and rules for County adoption. A County Solid Waste Department was also created to operate the daily functions of the solid waste system. As such, implementation of the original plan was a shared responsibility between the County and the Authority.

The original Delegation Agreement was written with the thought that the Authority would eventually construct a transfer station and begin directing all County waste to the transfer station, essentially taking control of the solid waste system. Litigation prevented a transfer station from being constructed. The Authority/County forged ahead with other

programs and services; however, it was under a Delegation Agreement that never really fit the mold. As such, confusion has sometimes occurred over powers and duties.

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION

To clarify powers and duties, a new Delegation Agreement was adopted in December 2012. Essentially, the Authority will function primarily as an advisory body, making recommendations to the Board of Commissioners on solid waste issues. Through County Recycling & Waste Department staff, the Authority will be tasked with evaluating all solid waste information and making recommendations for adoption by the County. The County will be the contracting party and guarantee financing for all projects.

GOVERNANCE AND PERSONNEL

The Cumberland County Recycling & Waste Authority consists of a seven member Board of Directors and an Executive Director. The Executive Director is also the Recycling & Waste Department Head. The Recycling & Waste Department has two additional staff members. In comparison to counties similar in size and population, the Department is comparably staffed. This is not to say that the staffing level is always adequate to fulfill the duties and requirements placed upon it by Act 101 through the PADEP and the County's Plan. It means that Cumberland County attempts to provide a host of services with the same manpower as its counterparts, which may or may not mirror the level of service and programs. The demographic complexities found across the large geographic area of the County create diverse demands and varying degrees of need for support and services. Enforcement, education and data management are therefore difficult to standardize and require more significant hours of staff time than in counties with more homogenous communities and programs. Based on the implementation schedule of the Plan, and the subsequent introduction of new programs and services, which could result from pending regulatory requirements, it is clear that the demands of the staff will not lessen.

With such a small staff, cross-training and shared responsibilities are common. Nevertheless, certain responsibilities are delineated for each person. Additional support staff may be necessary if the menu of service offerings is expanded. Any expansion of service offerings must contemplate the potential impact on the current staffing and ability to realign responsibilities. Following is a brief description of each position.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/DEPARTMENT HEAD

Reflecting the duality of responsibility for solid waste management issues in Cumberland County, the Director of the Cumberland County Recycling & Waste Department also serves as the Executive Director of the Cumberland County Recycling & Waste Authority. This person is the primary liaison between the Authority and the County.

The management of the Authority is guided by the Executive Director. This individual forecasts the financial needs and ensures that the organization operates within its budget. The Director must balance the needs of the community with the financial resources available. The Director is in a position of constantly evaluating existing programs and seeking out new opportunities. Often, this requires considerable time spent negotiating with municipal and civic organizations, private service providers, the County and the general public. The Director must stay informed on legal and regulatory issues with impact on municipal waste management in the County. The Director also serves as the contract administrator for all programs.

The yard waste equipment cooperative program is managed primarily by the Director. The Director helps to maintain the recycling drop-off sites and participates in the special collection events.

RECYCLING COORDINATOR

Education, program development, and enforcement are activities that drive recovery rates, which in turn can increase revenue in the form of Act 101, Section 904 Performance Grants. The Recycling Coordinator has traditionally been responsible for these items. In Cumberland County, the Recycling Coordinator has historically been responsible for the successful coordination and implementation of a variety of special collection events for household hazard waste, electronics, tires, telephone books and pharmaceuticals. Most recently, the Coordinator has also assumed a shared responsibility of maintaining the drop-off recycling sites and the yard waste equipment cooperative program.

Local municipalities, schools, businesses and other institutions rely on the Recycling Coordinator for technical support. This individual conducts waste audits and offers solutions for waste minimization, and ideas for imitating and improving recycling collection programs. The Recycling Coordinator also conducts educational seminars and does other public appearances and presentations related on solid waste and recycling issues.

Grant submissions also fall within the tasks assigned to the Recycling Coordinator. This individual not only prepares and submits grant applications for the County, but also makes this service available to the 33 municipalities in Cumberland County.

Additionally, the Recycling Coordinator is the data manager, tracking and monitoring recycling performance throughout the County and subsequently submitting reports to the PADEP. The administrative management responsibilities required of all County Recycling Coordinators by PADEP have grown since the inception of the plans developed under Act 101. At the same time, the expectations and goals for program services and enforcement have also increased making it difficult for one-person to accomplish it all.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

The Administrative Assistant is the first point of contact with the public. This individual plays an important role in education by increasing awareness for the programs and activities. By providing accurate information on the availability of outlets for various waste materials, this individual helps to prevent pollution by eliminating illicit dumping and improves public health and safety. As the web administrator, the Administrative Assistant ensures that news of events, programs, as well as County solid waste policies are disseminated in a timely fashion. Serving as the business manager, this individual prepares a draft and subsequently monitors the budget on a daily, weekly, monthly and yearly basis and prepares monthly and yearly closing reports for auditing purposes. The Administrative Assistant also serves as the internal grant administrator, tracking grant eligible expenses for financial closing reports and for reimbursement. Additionally, the Administrative Assistant ensures proper implementation of the transporter registration program and landfill reporting requirements.

EVALUATING THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Ambiguities and weaknesses in the delegation agreement between the County and the Authority were targeted as areas for improvement during the planning process. In light of this, the organizational structure utilized to implement the Plan was re-evaluated. A County Department with an advisory Authority was determined as the best organizational structure.

COUNTY DEPARTMENT WITH SOLID WASTE ADVISORY AUTHORITY

The Cumberland County Municipal Waste Management Plan will be implemented by the County based on recommendation and advice from the Authority. Members of the Authority receive appointments from the Board of County Commissioners. Each is representative of a select segment of public and private stakeholders in the County. Authority meetings are open to the public. The Board of County Commissioners is encouraged to send a representative.

Staff will be County employees and will bring solid waste issues to the Authority for discussion and recommendations. The Authority has the ability to make recommendations for facility design, development, real estate and procurement. However, the County retains ultimate approval for the finances and thus it has final say on the budget and any large expenditure. The Authority is also tasked with recommending language for ordinances, regulations, and resolutions for consideration by the Commissioners, as well as offering advice on pertinent solid waste issues.

BUDGETARY NEEDS

Operational costs remain fairly constant. Clearly, the largest expense is salaries and benefits followed closely by equipment replacement, based on a ten year average of purchases and straight-line depreciation. Program operating costs ranks third. The proposed budget does not take into account future growth or development of new programs.

During the planning process, the ability to secure long-term funding for services provided by the implementing entity was targeted as the single most critical issue.

Traditionally, revenue from administrative fees in the disposal capacity agreements, hauler licensing fees, and a variety of grants authorized through Act 101 for staffing, recycling performance, program development and planning provided funding. Additionally, monies were received from user fees from the yard waste cooperative, as well as donations from special collections events. Due to recent court rulings discussed earlier, many landfills exercised their ability to discontinue payment of administrative fees imposed by counties to administer their plans. Consequently, the flow of money from these fees has ceased.

Another source of income is derived from PADEP Act 101 Section 900 grants. The County is eligible to receive funds from four distinct types of grants. Section 901 grants provide funding for planning and feasibility studies. Section 902 grants are available for equipment and program development. Section 903 grants reimburse counties for half of the salary and expenses of the Recycling Coordinators. Section 904 grants can reimburse counties for total tons of materials recycled by the County if the materials are not claimed by a municipality. Other funding is often available for special collections such as electronic waste, household hazardous waste and tires.

The County and the Authority will need to develop new and reliable sources of income if the programs currently implemented are to survive. Several recommendations to secure funding were offered in the planning process. These range from negotiations with service providers to direct fees to users. The following narrative outlines some of those suggestions.

Renewed landfill disposal agreements do not include any criteria that require fees or services to be provided for inclusion of a facility in the Plan. Provisions for voluntary support of programs however, were pursued apart and separate from the capacity agreements. In-kind services and sponsorships of special collection events, educational programs and other items can be negotiated in lieu of traditional tipping fee assessments. Additionally, it is recommended that the County continue to pursue host fee agreements with facilities located within the County's borders.

The County could maximize its grant potential by submitting the salary and expenses of the Executive Director for the Section 903 reimbursement, provided the Director's time spent on recycling related activities as opposed to other administrative duties were sufficient enough to warrant the change. Additionally, many municipalities do not pursue reports from the commercial recycling activity occurring in their communities. The County should actively collect this information and report it with the county-wide data to bolster its own Section 904 Performance grant.

Cumberland County residents have benefitted for years from the solid waste services without realizing any direct costs. With escalating costs and diminishing grant programs, the practice of free services cannot be sustained. Counties throughout Pennsylvania have demonstrated that user fees do not significantly deter participation in such services. The County should develop a fee schedule for special collection events, and additional future services.

The County currently realizes some income from its yard waste equipment cooperative program. The fees should be reviewed periodically to ensure they are sufficient to sustain the actual costs of the program. Future costs of equipment replacement and repair may not be covered by grants and operational costs of transporting equipment will continue to escalate.

Finally, the County will be required to cover the operating costs of its solid waste programs not met by the aforementioned sources of revenue.

Overall, the recommended changes in the organizational structure and aggressive improvements in revenue generation are expected to strengthen the solid waste and recycling programs in Cumberland County. As seen in the various suggestions, contributions from stakeholders from County and municipal government, the general public, as well as the private sector are necessary if these desired services are to continue.