Introductions & Announcements

Lisa McDaniel opened the meeting with introductions.

Presentations

The focus of this meeting was on the education efforts of the waste management industry to help their customers learn how to recycle better.

Marie Steiner, City of Kearney

Kearney’s curbside program was implemented in 2011, and Kearney also has a drop-off recycling center. When the city was notified by their hauler that the residential curbside recycling stream was highly contaminated, the recycling committee engaged with the hauler on a waste audit. Following, the committee designed and mailed to residents a large-sized postcard on how to “recycle right”.

Hank Potts, Republic Services

To recap the past 2 years…

- Trends in material, light weighting and packaging were already stressing the industry
- China Sword broke the system, triggering commodity markets to drop dramatically

Following China’s closure, we have seen other countries begin to react to the flood of material hitting their ports. These countries do not have the infrastructure or capacity to absorb that level of material, so they are having to react and block imports:
• Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia and India have been overwhelmed with additional volume they are unable to handle and are closing their ports.
• The net effect is that the commodity markets worldwide are even more flooded with excess material than a year ago, which drives values even lower.

In the past 12-18 months, values of all commodities have dropped. The most common commodities in our programs (cardboard, mixed paper) combine for 76% of the volume (by weight) and have declined in value between 78% and 105%.

The economics of traditional recycling programs are no longer executable on the long term without a reset of the contract terms. The cost of a recycling program is the sum of fees for two services: the “collection fee” and the “net processing fee.”

Contamination in recycling has turned into one of those moving targets that becomes more and more difficult to hit. It seems like once you think the training is done, something happens in the market and you have to start all over again. We need to understand is the training should never be complete.

So, what does all of this mean? What do we do to “fix” it?
• Municipalities have to partner with hauling companies to figure out a solution
• We have to think out of the box and come up with a new model
• The new model may eliminate different waste streams
• The new model may cost money
• Invest in better education programs to change current behaviors
• Sharing of educational resources (MARC is a great example)

John Blessing, Waste Management

Education is the foundation to better recycling and Waste Management has been at it for some time with their “Recycle Often, Recycle Right” campaign. Nationally, the company still experiences a 25% contamination rate for recyclables.

Locally, they have conducted in-depth campaigns with three municipalities. One technique used is a “MRF audit.” Recyclables collected from the community are taken to a separate area of the MRF and community leaders are invited to sort through the materials. The goal of the sort is to give them a first-hand experience at seeing the level of non-recyclables that are put into recycling bins by their residents. The goal is to arm the leaders with the knowledge to spread the word in their community and educate residents about the need for better recycling practices.

Old Business / New Business

None.

Closing

The Executive Board meeting scheduled for November 20, 2019 has been cancelled. The next Management Council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 11, from 11:00 am – 1:00 pm at the Kauffman Foundation Conference Center.

MARC Solid Waste Management District

Marie Steiner, Chair
Lisa McDaniel, Secretary

Approved: January 15, 2020