

## **Open Work Session**

### **Amendment to the Wicomico County Solid Waste Management Plan to add an Office Building**

#### **Recycling Plan**

**July 21, 2020**

Mr. Mark Whitelock, Deputy Director of Public Works, came before Council. He said Bill No. 370 is the Office Building Recycling Plan, which took affect October 1, 2019, and needed to be amended into the ten-year management plan by July 1, 2020. He said it involves buildings over 150,000 square feet, and if the same person owns two facilities, the square footage of those combined facilities would make them eligible, so they would be covered under this as well. He said off the top, they have Perdue, Salisbury University (SU), Wor-Wic, the Government Office Building (GOB), PRMC, and, most likely, the Board of Education. Mr. Dodd asked for clarification on what had to be done by July 1, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, the acceptance into the ten-year waste management plan. Mr. Dodd said it is July 21 now.

Mr. Dodd asked Mrs. Hurley if this requires a Public Hearing, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, it does, and it has to be advertised two times for two consecutive weeks, so they can have that Public Hearing on August 18 at 10:00 a.m. Mr. Whitelock said he will reach out to the Maryland Department of Environment, and he is sure that will be fine.

Mr. Holloway asked Mr. Whitelock to go through, for the public, what this involves, and why they have to do this Bill, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, basically, the State is saying that any office building who has office space starting at 150,000 square feet or higher, whether it be government or a private industry, should enact a recycling plan. He said they do that here in the GOB with paper, cardboard, and cans, and then just, basically, the County tracks it. He said the County has to administer it because that is not something the State is going to do, but normally that is what they do. Mr. Holloway asked Mr. Whitelock if most of the businesses he mentioned a few minutes ago probably already have this in place anyway, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, probably yes. He said he knows SU is big on recycling, and he is sure Wor-Wic is too. He said they have recycling here in the GOB, so he thinks everybody is probably compliant already, or it would not take much. Mr. Holloway asked if this is going to cause Mr. Whitelock to have to increase employees or build any spaces, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, no.

Mr. Hastings asked, as part of this recycling plan, if they took all of the recycling out of this building and straight into the dump without recycling it, would that be meeting the intent of this? Mr. Whitelock asked Mr. Hastings for clarification. Mr. Hastings clarified, for all of these businesses, and even the GOB, if the County took all of the recycling and took the materials and put them straight in the dump, would that still be meeting the intent of this, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, under normal circumstances, no. Mr. Hastings said he thinks Mr. Whitelock knows why he is bringing this up, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, yes, he does. Mr. Hastings said, just so the public is clear, the County is not currently recycling, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, to clarify, they have moved back into some recycling at a lower level to what their staffing can handle. He said they are doing cardboard, newspaper, tin cans, and aluminum cans currently. Mr. Hastings said, on another side note, it would be nice to better evaluate how they can actually pull off recycling without taking advantage of free labor, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, approximately ten employees. Mr. Hastings said, at this point in time, it is one thing for health, but, going forward, it would be better as a County to be more self-sustaining, to which Mr.

Whitelock responded, he had never seen a pandemic before, so they went with what they had in front of them. He said, from a dollar point, it is a lot cheaper to have inmate labor come in and do the work, and they get out, so they are doing the things they need to do, and the County is able to do the things they need to do. He said, unfortunately, in a pandemic, they restrict the inmates from coming out. Mr. Dodd then asked if the County is paying for the inmate labor, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, yes. He said it is about \$1 an hour, or \$1 a day, or something like that, but it is not much. He said, if they compare that to employee salary and benefits, and everything else that goes along with that, it is small. Mr. Dodd asked, if the County had to hire ten employees, would the recycling pay for it, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, no. He said it struggles to break even now.

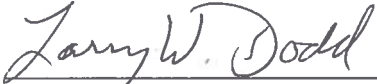
Mr. Dodd said, to clear the record, he is OCD about these plastic bottles and jars, but the County is not doing plastic or glass at this time, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, no, not right now. He said glass was something they struggled with anyway because there is no market for glass, but they have found other ways to get around it. He said every once in awhile they get somebody who comes in and wants to make what they call glassphalt. He explained, they will swap aggregate for glass chips in their blacktop so it sparkles. He said he has seen it in Ocean City. Mr. Dodd asked if they discontinued that, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, they still do it whenever they can. He said it is just trying to be inventive. He said they do not throw it in the landfill, they still have found ways of using it that benefit. He said, unfortunately, unless it goes out on a truck for glassphalt, it is not something they can count in their recycling percentages for the year, but it is still not ending up in the landfill either, so that works out. He said, as he said, plastics right now are the only thing they are not actively recycling. He said plastic is just very labor intensive, and labor is the one thing they do not have. He said these other things are things they can pick through fairly minorly, and work them through the system and get them in, but they are still not to the point where they can take the pre-COVID volume of material that they were taking, if that makes sense. He said he reached out to the City the other day, and they said, for what the County is doing right now, it probably would not benefit the City cost-wise to go back into it yet, but just as soon as the County can pick it up and go further, then they will go.

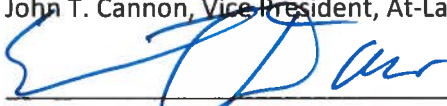
Mr. Hastings said, to be clear, most of the plastic, even including the two pieces of plastic that are sitting on the desk in front of Mr. Whitelock, would not be recyclable in the first place, so the majority of the plastic goes right in the dumpster anyway. Mr. Whitelock said one of the reasons they use the wording they do is because, actually, for example, an oil jug is recyclable, but the only problem is the oil that was in the jug has now contaminated the plastic stream. He said how they word things and how they do things are to disallow these types of items from coming in because there is nothing they can do with them anyway. He clarified, yes, the plastic is recyclable, but it is contaminated plastic, so they cannot do anything with it.

Mr. Dodd asked when Mr. Whitelock thinks they will be up to full force to complete the plastics and glass recycling, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, that would be a question probably for the Governor of Maryland. Mr. Dodd asked what percentage of recycling the County is required to do, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, 21 percent. He said that is configured by population. Mr. Dodd asked what the County averages, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, they are generally above the 21 percent. He said they have had years where they were much higher than 20 percent, but this year it will probably be a struggle to make that, but they will not be in that boat by themselves. He clarified, there will be many

other Counties who were caught in the same circumstance they are doing exactly the same things that Wicomico is doing right now. Mr. Dodd asked if that is a requirement, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, yes.

There was no further discussion.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Larry W. Dodd, President, District 3

\_\_\_\_\_  
John T. Cannon, Vice President, At-Large  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Ernest F. Davis, District 1

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nicole Acle, District 2

\_\_\_\_\_  
Josh Hastings, District 4

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Joe Holloway, District 5

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
William R. McCain, At-Large

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Laura Hurley, Council Administrator