

Gustavus Disposal & Recycling Center (DRC) Quarterly Staff Report
Paul Berry, DRC Manager/ Operator
Monday, November 9th, 2020

My last quarterly report was at the August 10th General Meeting. My next quarterly report is scheduled for the February 8th 2020 General Meeting.

General Operations and Management

Labor

For this quarter I am going to talk about the DRC's temporary labor pool (Pool) and the proposed DRC Operator position. The Pool has a life span of one calendar year. In November of each year I announce that the City is taking applications for next year's Pool. Interested people apply or re-apply for being a part of the next Pool. I do interviews in December and send my recommendation to the City Administrator so that by January the new Pool is ready to go. In the following November the process starts all over again.

The Pool has five slots with several members re-applying each year. Generally one or two of the members work most of the hours during the year and the other members, in addition to myself, provide support or relief for the main worker(s). Since the Pool does not provide for year-round, full-time work there was usually an operator who favors the winter and a different operator who favors the summer. This is done to compliment their other seasonal employment. While this arrangement is flexible it has some short comings, such as:

1. A succession plan for my position as manager - who takes my place when I retire, am fired, or hit by a bus?;
2. Training. There is a lot to managing the City's waste handling service. While Pool members learn the principals of the operation from hands-on experience there is also need for operational training into why we do things the way way we do and what the applicable state and Federal regulations are. Additionally there is training into working with hazardous substances (HAZWOPER training) and training in compost facility operations. The City only funds such training for regular staff, in this case myself, and not to Pool staff. If the City were to elect to formally train Pool staff then all members would need it and with up to five members that is an expensive and logistically challenging proposition.
3. Seasonal ramp-up in May. It can be a challenge to ramp up the DRC's operation in the spring while at the same time changing staff.

To work with these challenges, last year at this time I was promoting the idea of creating the DRC Operator position. This would be a new, summer full-time, winter part-time, regular position with all the benefits associated with the City's regular positions. The Pool would still exist but would have a smaller number of members.

The pandemic nixed the DRC Operator position for FY21 as the Council chose not to fund it. I was okay with that as I knew funding would be tight and waste flows would be down. But, if the DRC has waste flows in the summer of 2021 like we did in the summer of 2019, which I know is not a given, we need to seriously look at the DRC Operator position again. I don't plan on retiring in the next three years but we never know what the future holds for us and we all want the DRC operate smoothly during any changes in management.

COVID-19 impacts

As mentioned in my last two reports I have been comparing monthly weight totals between an average of 2018 and 2019 weights to 2020 weights. Noticeable changes started to occur in March. Please see the table below:

Month	% reduction from the 2018 & 2019 average
March	21%
April	9%
May	40%
June	62%
July	45%
August	44%
September	31%

The compost scene

Overall there was less food waste received over the course of the summer as all commercial use was down. But the flow of food waste from Gustavus's residential side has been pretty steady. Last year the DRC received a lot of food waste overall, and several yards of what was received last fall was too green to be included in this springs sale. This older material has been blended with what was received this summer and it looks like we'll have as much this coming April as we did this past April.

I am sorry that the Quonset replacement project did not pan out this spring and I'll write more about compost operation improvements in my capital project summary later in this report.

The waste mound

The pandemic has given us an upside - the reduction in the amount of waste flowing into the mound. This slowdown has helped with the burial process - covering the older parts of the balefill with topsoil. Regular burial of the balefill is usually a losing situation in a normal summer but this summer staff has been able to properly bury all of last summer's and this past winter's bales. Off-hand I would say the loss of the usual summer waste flows into the mound will add a year of life to it.

Community Chest

The Community Chest re-opened for sales to the public on Saturday, September 26th after having been closed to the general public since mid-March. On Wednesday, October 22nd Wednesday sales were resumed and the Chest now open for six hours a week, one hour a week more than this time last year.

I would like to thank Vicki Bender and Annie Mackovjak for being the crew bosses for the Chest. We are all very fortunate that these two individuals really value the Chest and are happy to give of their time to make sure the Chest is working. It is an on-going effort to coordinate volunteers and sort through donations. There is also the on-going purging of non-selling items, and going through seasonal clothing and holiday material that either goes up into the attic or comes down from the attic.

I would like to thank the following individuals for staffing the front desk, sorting and purging or providing general support: Vicki Bender, Annie Mackovjak, Katy Dighton, Becky King, Amanda Dunaway, Ula Syrene, Iris White, Sasha Smith, Meadow Brook, Bella Furr, Steve Tevebaugh, Artemis BonaDea, Ben Sadler, Joyce Lupro, Penny Cook, Cristina Graves, Paula ?, Kim Ney, Deb Johnson, Maureen Moore, Connie Darnell and Judy Hardy. I apologize if I missed anyone.

I am also in the process of trying to find a new outlet for our overstock of clothing that we

used to sent to the Hoonah Thrift Store. I am hopeful I can find an operation in the lower 48 that we can periodically ship to. I am also in the process of planning an upgrade for the lighting in the smaller “301” building.

Solid Waste Management and Facility Planing Process (“SWMP”)

As mentioned in the “Whats up” document for the Council, the SWMP is an extension of the DRC’s existing General Operations Plan and Food Waste Composting Plan. I have not made any progress on this front since my last report but it is winter now so I need to pick this effort up again. One of the main planning elements of the SWMP is in figuring out the best new building for our operation: its layout, size, construction and how to fund it. Another big component of the SWMP is planning for what happens when the mound reaches capacity. The City either starts shipping non-recycle waste out, expands the mound or a combination of both.

Capital Project Summaries

New Composting Facility/ Quonset replacement

Project description:

As described in previous reports, the objective of this project is to replace the failing Quonset structure with a properly engineered and more robust composting facility capable of processing greater amounts of material in a more temperature controlled way than our current operation can. This project also includes paving more of the composting yard with concrete and installing concrete push walls behind the piles of wood chips, sawdust, overs and finished or curing compost.

Project status:

I started this effort three years ago with an e-mail to Peter Moon of O2 Composting Systems & Training which was the start of the plan set for replacing the Quonset. I was also seeking to better understand food waste composting in general and how to have better work flow within our composting operation. I received formal compost facility training in October of 2018 and put forth my first RFQ proposal for replacing the Quonset in May of 2019. That RFQ failed due to the lack of an engineer’s stamp and a confusing set of plans. That failure also resulted in my doing work with Terra Construction & Design and Timberline Engineering to come up with a good set of plans for a new facility complete with an engineer’s stamp. Matt Davis produced a wonderful set of plans and the project went out to bid this past May. Unfortunately the one bid received was \$50,000 above what was available for the project. Due to financial limitations the City is experiencing during the COVID-19 crises and the high cost of the facility considering the amount of material to be processed in it on an annual basis, I decided it is best to go back to the drawing board and come up with something that is less expensive but still accomplishes all the goals of the project. I am focusing on having another plan set together by next spring. I would also like to test the water at the DRC for PFAS to see if I can use it in the composting operation or if I have to rely on a more expensive cistern for water.

In-flow Storage Area Project

More information about the purpose of this storage area can be found in earlier reports or in the DRC’s General Operations Plan.

Project Status:

Fairweather Construction completed their work on the project in mid-May and we have been moving into the new storage since that time. It is very nice having adequate room to store the materials we recycle and to have the material located so close to the main building.

The next phase of this project is finishing the installation of the 8' chain-link fencing around the storage area. I have selected chain-link that has integral brown colored slating to act as a visual barrier so that what is stored in the in-flow storage area will be hidden from view.

Household Hazardous Waste Facility

Project description:

No change since my last report. This project is the specification and purchase of a 20' long x 8' wide & 8' high container designed for household hazardous waste storage. The unit includes spill containment, ventilation, lighting, shelving, and signage. The proposed container will be fully-constructed at a facility in the lower 48 and is ready to use upon arrival in Gustavus.

Project Status:

The funds for the purchase of this unit have been awarded by the Council. Now that the In-flow storage area project is complete, which includes an area for the unit, I will be going over the specifications and will be developing a list of at least three vendors that I will solicit quotes from. Shipping costs have changed since I last went over the costs for this project and I will need to ensure that we can get the new facility here and set up within the project's budget.

New Building

No significant advancements since my last report. I am hoping to use this winter to work with an architectural firm that specializes in the construction of transfer stations. Our existing building is too small for the amount of waste that is flowing through it but simply placing a larger building beside it or in its place is not going to solve all our problems. We need a building that accommodates material drop-off from the public, the operation of a large horizontal baler and the operation of powered loaders. We also have to know cost and what funding sources are available.

Year-round running water

This is a project funded by the CARES Act. The goal of the project is to provide hot and cold running water for hand washing in the Office's changing room. Currently Glacier Bay Construction has installed the well and we are waiting on the work on Berry's Specialty Contracting and Salmon River Electric to install and connect all the pieces.

The end, thank you.

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