



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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BENTON COUNTY

Solid Waste Advisory Council (SWAC)

Work Session

January 12, 2022 **DRAFT** Minutes 6:00 pm

Members Present: Linda Brewer, Fred Penning, Ken Eklund, John McEvoy, Jay Simpkins, Deborah Gile,

Staff Present: Greg Verret (Benton County Community Development), Daniel Redick (Benton County Solid Waste and Water Quality Coordinator), Linda Ray (Benton County Community Development)

Call to Order/Introductions. Linda Brewer, Vice Chair called the work session to order at 6:02pm. Jay Simpkins (previous chair) attended but his term on SWAC ended on December 31, 2021. SWAC members introduced themselves and welcomed the council's newest member; Ken Eklund. Ken has resided in Benton County for six years and was previously involved in city planning and environmental issues in California. Ken shared his eagerness to continue that type of involvement here in Benton County. Ken lives about 4.5 miles from the landfill.

SWAC Meeting Process Discussion. Linda began the discussion by stating that SWAC members should have a shared understanding and agreement on how the council's meetings are conducted. She shared feedback on the last several meetings that involved more public interest and discussion around the CUP application for expanding the Coffin Butte Landfill. Along with the need for public engagements at the SWAC meeting to be productive and clear expectations. Debi agreed with a better process in how SWAC meetings are conducted and stated that this work session will help develop a plan for moving forward.

John suggested spending the first five minutes of each meeting to explain SWAC's role in representing Benton County in regards to solid waste and the landfill. Jay emphasized that SWAC is an advisory council that has the opportunity to make suggestions to the Board of Commissioners. But has no authority to make decisions regarding the landfill.

Fred commented on the previous meetings and the public interest at those meetings. He stated that SWAC's role is to represent the whole county and although this particular issue with the potential landfill expansion raised interest and opinion from neighbors, SWAC should keep in mind that the county as a whole may have differing opinions on the subject.

Ken asked for clarification on the mission of SWAC and the process involved in the meetings. Ken is a new member of the council starting January 1, 2022 and expressed interest in more communication regarding the onboarding process of becoming a member.

Linda suggested four points in improving the SWAC meetings regarding public comment. SWAC members discussed each suggestion as follows;

Limit the time per citizen comment to enable more people to speak and a better sense of order at the meetings. The SWAC agendas often include several topics of discussion and to keep the meetings moving forward and productive, the opportunity for public comment should fit in the timeline of accomplishing discussion on each agenda item. The council agreed that if a particular issue (such as the landfill expansion) is up for discussion, then there should be more time allotted for engagement with the public. The council decided to provide 3-5 minutes per citizen unless the meeting involves more interest and focus on public feedback. Then more time should be set aside for the “citizen comment” section of the meeting agenda.

Recommendation to the guidelines on citizen comments. Linda suggested communicating that if a community member would like to make comments at SWAC/DSAC meetings, then they should sign up 24 hours prior to the meeting. This would ensure more organization and structure to the meetings. Along with encouraging the public to prepare their comments prior to the meeting rather than as a response to the subject matter at the meeting. Moving forward, this recommendation will be implemented. Ken raised the question regarding in-person meetings and the process of citizen comments and signing up prior to the meetings. The council decided to re-visit this subject once public meetings move back to in-person gatherings and not hosted virtually.

During the SWAC meetings, only those that have signed up prior to the event would be allowed to speak during the “citizen comment” section of the agenda. The council also agreed to close any “chat box” option during the meeting. This opportunity was available through the virtual platform at previous meetings and members expressed that it was distracting to focus on the discussion and that community members expressed responses and criticism of the council that was not productive.

Encouraging the public to engage with questions prior to the meetings. Linda shared a situation prior to a recent SWAC meeting where a member of the public emailed several questions ahead of time. Linda responded to those questions and saw the value in having time to address concerns or questions ahead of time. Which also allowed for more discussion outside the meeting, freeing up more time during the meeting for agenda items.

Member Requests

Debi suggested the council proceed with the four guidelines discussed regarding SWAC meetings and public engagement. She also suggested revisiting these guidelines each year when a new chair is elected.

Ken expressed interest in having materials regarding SWAC or landfill issues to be more available on the county website.

Agenda Items for the next SWAC meeting

More discussion regarding public documents
Ideas for better onboarding for new council members.

The meeting adjourned at 6:54pm (Chair Brewer left the meeting at 6:53pm).

