



**Benton
County**

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT**

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4500 SW Research Way
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MEETING MINUTES

Disposal Site Advisory Committee (DSAC)

February 12, 2025

Benton County DSAC Chair Rachel Purcell called the meeting to order at 6:03 P.M. The meeting was open to the public virtually via a published Zoom link.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ATTENDING

Rachel Purcell, Chair
David Hackleman, Vice-Chair (virtual)
Jennifer Field (virtual)
Chuck Gilbert
Brent Pawlowski
Charlene Carroll
David Livesay
Bret Davis, Republic Services

STAFF

Petra Schuetz, *Interim Community
Development Director*
Bailey Payne, *Solid Waste Program
Coordinator*

GUESTS

Paul Neatfeld, County Resident; "PGN in chat"
Debbie Palmer, County Resident
Kevin Kenaga (from Zoom Reports)
Lucy Jones (from Zoom Reports)

Agenda Item #1: Call to Order

Agenda Item #2: Public Comment

Paul Nietfeld raised concerns about discrepancies in landfill intake volume data, noting a difference between his calculated figure of 1.045 million tons and the DEQ report of 1.117 million tons, a difference of over 72,000 tons. He requested clarification and guidance on reconciling the numbers. Nietfeld also highlighted concerns about enforcement of landfill intake limits. Davis acknowledged the discrepancy but lacked an immediate explanation, noting some materials might not be included in franchise fees. The issue was referred to Payne for follow-up, with Neatfeld requesting to receive the findings.

Agenda Item #3: Approval of Meeting Minutes from January 8, 2025

Review of Previous Meeting Minutes

- The committee reviewed the minutes from the last meeting and checked for any necessary corrections.

- A correction was noted: A member was mistakenly referred to as "Commissioner" instead of "Committee Member."
- The error appeared in multiple places, including page 2 of the document.

Discussion on the Style of Meeting Minutes

- A member noted that the minutes were summarized differently than in previous meetings.
- Previously, the minutes followed a detailed, play-by-play format, while the new format was more synthesized and summarized.
- Concern was raised that some important discussions were omitted, including a discussion on methane emissions monitoring and David Hackleman's work with Republic Services on methane data.
- The committee debated whether the new format was effective or if more detail was needed to ensure key discussions were properly recorded.

Committee Input on Minutes Format

- Some members preferred a balance between summary and detail, ensuring important points were not lost.
- The administrative assistant handling the minutes was acknowledged as experienced, but guidance might be needed to ensure completeness without creating a transcript-like record.

Final Checks for Comments or Corrections

- Members were given a final opportunity to provide additional comments or corrections before proceeding to the review of action items.

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Agenda Item #4: Coffin Butte Landfill Expansion Update

1. Review of Action Items and EPA Communication Issues

- The committee reviewed the previous meeting's action items, including outreach to DEQ and EPA to determine if there was an active case involving Coffin Butte.
- Payne reported that he did not receive a substantive response from DEQ or EPA, only basic test results without interpretation.
- Concerns were raised about the lack of transparency from EPA and conflicting reports in the media.
- Republic Services confirmed receiving an EPA information request, but it was not a violation or fine—just a standard landfill operations inquiry.

2. Concerns Over Public Perception and Lack of Clear Information

- Hackleman and others expressed concern that misinformation was spreading due to the lack of clear communication from regulatory agencies.
- Discussion on media coverage: Reports suggested an open EPA case, but official records do not list Coffin Butte as an active enforcement case.
- Senator Merkley's comments were brought up, implying EPA was investigating, but no official confirmation was available.

3. Landfill Methane Emissions & Monitoring Issues

- The committee revisited methane exceedances and how they are reported.
- Republic Services explained that finding exceedances is a normal part of landfill management, used to identify and correct problem areas.

- Concerns were raised that the public only hears about the exceedances, not the corrective actions taken.
- Proposal to track improvements over time to demonstrate effectiveness of corrective actions.

4. Lack of Communication from Regulatory Agencies

- The EPA and DEQ do not freely share inspection reports, and often, information is obtained only through FOIA requests.
- The committee discussed ways to improve direct communication with regulators.
- Some members suggested formalizing a process to request regular updates from DEQ and EPA.

5. Need for a Communications Representative

- Carroll was appointed as Chair of a new Communications Subcommittee to act as the committee's liaison with external entities.
- The goal is to ensure transparency and facilitate better communication with the public and regulators.

6. Coffin Butte Expansion Update

- Republic Services submitted an expansion application on January 15th.
- Benton County deemed the application complete, but additional documents are being prepared before review.
- The application will go through multiple levels of review:
 - April: ENRAC review
 - May-June: Planning Commission decision
 - Possible appeals to the Board of Commissioners and Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA)

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Agenda Item #5: Update on Fire Safety

Discussion:

- Republic Services and Benton County staff provided an update on fire safety measures at the landfill.
- A prior third-party fire risk assessment determined that the overall risk remains minimal.
- Republic Services is evaluating the feasibility of implementing a Fire Rover, a solar-powered fire monitoring system; however, insufficient cellular service at the landfill poses a challenge. Alternatives such as Starlink are being explored to support the system.
- Estimated costs for the Fire Rover system range from \$75,000 to \$100,000, with additional monthly monitoring fees between \$1,500 and \$2,000.

Committee Discussion & Concerns:

- Hackleman inquired about more cost-effective alternatives and suggested increased collaboration with local fire departments to explore additional solutions.
- Concerns were raised about fire detection after operational hours, as past incidents were reported by passersby rather than on-site monitoring.

- Committee members emphasized the need for an improved response plan, including using water trucks and soil coverage as primary suppression methods.

Action Items:

- Republic Services to continue evaluating feasibility and cost of the Fire Rover system.
- Committee to review fire safety measures at a future meeting, incorporating recommendations from fire department representatives.

Agenda Item #6: Approval of 2023 Coffin Butte Landfill Community Concerns Report

Discussion:

- The committee reviewed the 2023 Coffin Butte Landfill Community Concerns Report, a compilation of public concerns received by Benton County, Republic Services, and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) over the past year.
- Members noted variations in how concerns were documented, with some issues summarized briefly and others copied verbatim from public comments.
- A discussion was held on whether to refine the report's format to provide more consistency in future versions.
- It was clarified that the report is primarily required by Oregon DEQ, but copies are also provided to the Board of Commissioners.

Committee Action:

- A motion was made to approve the community concerns report as written.
- Motion was seconded and passed unanimously (Pawlowski; Carroll seconded).

Action Items:

- Committee to revisit the structure of the 2024 Community Concerns Report to ensure consistency in summarizing public input.

Agenda Item #7: DSAC Scope and Goals: Methane, Fire Safety, Odors

Methane Discussion:

- The committee discussed the monitoring and mitigation of methane emissions and landfill odors as part of its ongoing goals.
- David Hackleman raised concerns about the public's perception of odors as a proxy for contamination. He noted that while some odors are detectable and harmless, others may be undetectable yet hazardous.
- It was mentioned that methane itself lacks an odor and does not dissolve in water, making detection more complex.
- Committee members explored the possibility of deploying air quality monitoring stations at strategic locations to better track odor sources and improve community reporting.

- The committee also acknowledged that odor complaints often lack clear attribution, as different facilities and natural conditions contribute to variations in perceived smells.

Committee Action & Next Steps:

- Benton County and Republic Services staff to research air quality monitoring technologies and assess feasibility for implementation.
- Republic Services to continue methane monitoring efforts and report findings to the committee.
- Further discussion scheduled for a future DSAC meeting to evaluate potential mitigation strategies and community engagement efforts.

Fire safety Discussion:

- The committee revisited fire safety concerns at the landfill, focusing on monitoring and response capabilities.
- Hackleman emphasized the need for cost-effective fire monitoring solutions, expressing concerns over the high cost of a Fire Rover system (estimated at \$75k to \$100k with ongoing monitoring fees of \$1,500 to \$2k per month). He suggested a meeting with Republic Services, county staff, and Adair Rural Fire & Rescue to explore more affordable alternatives.
- Republic Services provided an update on existing fire suppression strategies, including:
 - 1,500 to 2,000-gallon water trucks on-site.
 - Stockpiling soil for immediate fire suppression to reduce the need for water.
 - Minimizing the landfill's active working face to better control potential hot spots.
- Concerns were raised regarding after-hours fire incidents, as recent fires were detected by passersby rather than on-site monitoring.
- The committee discussed potential partnerships with local fire departments to improve fire detection and response planning.

Committee Action & Next Steps:

- Benton County staff to coordinate a meeting with Republic Services and fire department representatives to assess fire safety options.
- Republic Services to evaluate alternative fire monitoring solutions and report findings at a future meeting.

- Committee to continue discussions at future DSAC meetings, incorporating recommendations from fire safety experts.

Committee Member Ideas:

- Hackleman raised a question regarding whether DSAC's responsibilities include oversight of the composting site across the road from Coffin Butte. It was noted that while DSAC's primary focus is the landfill, concerns related to the composting site could be brought up within the committee.
- There was a suggestion to include a summary of DSAC's mission and responsibilities at the beginning of each meeting's minutes to help guide discussions and maintain alignment with the committee's purpose.
- Members expressed interest in clarifying DSAC's role in relation to ENRAC, particularly concerning landfill expansion reviews. It was noted that while ENRAC evaluates the expansion proposal, DSAC can still submit public comments and recommendations independently.
- A proposal was made to invite the Benton County attorney to provide an overview of DSAC's legal scope and authority to ensure the committee is operating within its intended function.
- The committee discussed establishing a designated liaison for external communications, particularly for outreach to government agencies such as the EPA and Oregon DEQ, ensuring that DSAC has an official representative for inquiries and information requests.

Action Items:

- Staff to coordinate with the County Attorney for a future presentation on DSAC's legal scope.
- DSAC to define its engagement strategy with ENRAC on landfill-related matters.

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Agenda Item #8: Request Agenda Items, staff requests for next meeting

Discussion:

- The committee discussed potential agenda items for the next meeting, with members suggesting several topics for further review.
- Charli Carroll raised concerns about PFAS contamination from landfill liners and the potential impact on leachate treatment and water quality. She requested a discussion on how leachate containing PFAS is managed before it reaches local waterways.
- David Hackleman suggested dedicating time to hydrology and groundwater flow studies, particularly in relation to how landfill operations may affect local water systems. He proposed inviting relevant experts to present findings on groundwater monitoring and contamination risks.

- Bret Davis recommended addressing public misinformation regarding landfill operations, citing a mailer that claimed leachate was being dumped into the Willamette River. The committee agreed to clarify the accuracy of such claims and discuss how DSAC should engage with public concerns.
- Members debated whether to maintain public comment sessions in future meetings. While some favored using meeting time to focus on DSAC goals, others felt it was important to continue addressing community concerns as landfill expansion discussions progressed.

Committee Action & Next Steps:

- Staff to invite groundwater and hydrology experts to a future meeting.

Adjourned at 8:09 P.M.

Next Meeting: March 12, 2025, Holmes & Shipley Meeting Room, First Floor, Kalapuya Building, 4500 SW Research Way, Corvallis, Oregon

Action Items	Lead	Status
1. Pawlowski to follow up with finance team regarding discrepancy between actual tonnage and franchise fee tonnage reported.	Pawlowski	
2. Payne to forward EPA information request letter to committee members.	Payne	Included in 3/12/25 meeting packet
3. Hackleman to coordinate with Koster and Pawlowski to discuss landfill emissions monitoring.	Hackleman	
4. Pawlowski to set up meeting time for Hackleman to discuss fire safety options with Koster and Adair Rural Fire Department representative.	Pawlowski	
5. Carroll (as Communications Subcommittee Chair) to reach out to Senator Merkley's office, Statesman Journal, and Gazette Times reporters regarding EPA statements about Coffin Butte.	Carroll	
6. Payne to coordinate with Koster to prepare for a hydrology presentation, potentially in May 2025.	Payne / Koster	
7. Committee to discuss how to address public claims about leachate disposal at a future meeting.	Committee	

Minutes Prepared By: Amanda Makepeace, Administrative Assistant