



MEETING MINUTES
Disposal Site Advisory Committee (DSAC)
April 9, 2025

Benton County DSAC Chair Rachel Purcell called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M. The meeting was open to the public virtually via a published Zoom link.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ATTENDING

Rachel Purcell, Chair (present)
David Hackleman, Vice-Chair (present)
Jennifer Field (present)
Chuck Gilbert (present)
Brent Pawlowski (absent)
Charlene Carroll (virtual)
David Livesay (present)
Paul Koster, Republic Services (present)
Robert Kipper (present)
Peter Peterson (excused)
Diane Cassidy (excused)

STAFF

Bailey Payne, Solid Waste Program Coordinator

GUESTS

Camille (no last name; from Zoom report)
Ken Eklund
Debbie Palmer
Kevin Kenaga
Paul Nietfeld
Nancy Whitcombe
Mark Yeager

1. Call to Order – Chair Purcell called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

2. Public Comments – Note: Staff forgot to start recording until 6:18 p.m.

- Ken Eklund provided comments to the DSAC:
 - Called attention again to the EPA Enforcement letter from last meeting
 - Bailey obtained the letter through a FOIA request

- Called the Committee’s attention to Ken’s “Explainer” document which is in the meeting packet as well as the EPA Enforcement letter.
- The EPA served what’s called a Section 114 Information Request. A Section 114 IR is functionally a government subpoena. It’s the EPA version of a IRS audit and shows intention to initiate enforcement action. Republic Services received it in January, but did not mention it in their Application materials submitted in March.
- Can Paul answer: what is Republic doing in response to the Section 114 IR? Have they submitted the info to the EPA?
- Republic Services’ Davis provided clarification on the nature of statements in the packet, noting that some comparisons made (e.g., likening the process to an IRS audit) are subjective. The current EPA request is a document request, not an enforcement action. While enforcement could result, it is not guaranteed. Similar document requests are occurring at landfills nationwide, not just in Benton County.
- EPA Context: Bailey followed up with Sarah Conley (EPA) regarding media statements. Sarah confirmed the national scope of the EPA’s National Enforcement and Compliance Initiative. The process is routine, though communication from the EPA has lacked clarity.

Nancy Whitcombe also provided public comment. She presented two documents from the 2021 CUP expansion application that provide guidance for making a decision on the application. These documents are posted on the [DSAC website](#).

3. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

- Minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed.
 - Correction noted: Gilbert’s attendance was marked with a question mark; it was clarified that he was present, though not captured on the roll due to a missed roll call.
 - Motion to approve minutes with the noted correction was made and passed unanimously.
-

Action Items Review

- PFAS Presentation: Jennifer will provide a presentation during the next meeting (scheduled for May).

- Hydrology Consultant: Paul contacted the current consultant to review hydrology data. Due to the data volume, analysis will take time. The consultant is not local, but a virtual presentation via Zoom may be possible. Paul will follow up.
- Eric Tuppen Update (Provided by Dave): Dave reconnected with Eric Tuppen, a long-time project consultant since 1992. Eric reaffirmed the validity of past work on the monitoring system. Dave noted the technical complexity of the groundwater system (e.g., groundwater divide, tight clays, fractured basalt). Eric declined to present or engage further, citing retirement.

4. Presentation: Intake Data Access and Financial Implications (Calculation of Host Fee Tonnage) - Presenter: Paul Neitfeld (County resident, retired engineer)

- Paul shared that he served on the BCTT A.1 subcommittee (Size, Capacity, and Longevity). The goal of the presentation is to provide data and recommendations to county financial staff and the DSAC.
- **Purpose of Timely Intake Data:**
 1. To verify the size of the host fee annually.
 2. To allow Benton County to project host fees in advance using quarterly data from ODEQ.
 3. To enable DSAC to monitor intake volumes throughout the calendar year relative to the intake cap.
- **Budget Context:**
 - Although landfill revenue is ~1.6% of the total county budget, it comprises ~7.5% of the discretionary general revenue fund.
 - A significant drop in franchise fee revenue occurred (from \$3.5M to \$2.5M) due to changes in the landfill franchise agreement.
- **Fee Structure:**
 - Franchise Fee: Fixed annual payment distributed monthly.
 - Host Fee: Variable, per-ton fee based on defined solid waste intake; it has become the dominant contributor to county revenue.
- **Issues Identified:**

- Lack of monthly intake data makes it difficult for finance staff to verify payments or forecast future revenue.
- Coffin Butte Annual Report, which includes volume data, is often delayed until Q2 of the following year.
- The franchisee is no longer required to provide monthly/quarterly volume reports under the current franchise agreement.
- **Alternative Data Source:**
 - Quarterly solid waste disposal reports submitted to ODEQ may serve as a proxy to estimate intake tonnage.
- **Proposed Calculation Method:**
 - Intake Tonnage = Total Tons Received + Sewage Sludge – Alternate Daily Cover (ADC) Waste
 - Using this formula, Paul generated estimates for previous years and compared them to actual payouts with fairly close alignment.
- **Advantages of This Approach:**
 - Allows verification of past payments using independent data.
 - Enables financial forecasting and greater oversight by DSAC.
 - Enhances transparency and trust between the county, franchisee, and the public.
- **Intake Trends:**
 - Significant increase in waste intake from 2016–2017.
 - Intake has remained close to the 1.1M ton cap since the 2020 franchise agreement.
 - Based on the proposed estimation method, total host fee revenue for 2025 is expected to be approximately \$3.6 million.
- The goal is to offer more timely updates to DSAC and County Finance staff using this method, potentially on a quarterly basis.
- **Discussion on Formula Validity:**
 - A DSAC member inquired whether the proposed formula was a reliable proxy.

- Franchisee Response: The franchisee emphasized they stand by their own internal numbers, which are checked extensively. However, they noted it's difficult to back-calculate intake due to the complexity and variety of waste categories, some of which (e.g., wood waste sent to PRC) do not count toward landfill tonnage.
- Clarification: The effort was not intended to challenge the franchisee's data but to provide Benton County an independent verification tool.
- Franchisee Position: Without deep involvement, it's hard to confirm the formula's accuracy, as non-counting materials complicate the picture.
- Bailey (Benton County): Expressed support for the method as a "good proxy," acknowledging it may not be exact but would still offer valuable insight. Estimated margin of error is within 1%. Any discrepancy or anomaly from the estimates would warrant further discussion. Bailey noted that while most incoming waste is "counting waste," there are around 75 different material types, some of which are flagged as non-counting and do not count toward the intake cap. Past data, prior to classification of non-counting waste, suggested the landfill may have exceeded the 1.1 million ton intake cap. However, once non-counting waste was subtracted, Coffin Butte remained near—but not over—the cap in recent years.

5. Agenda Item: Fire Safety and Site Observation – David Hackelman

David Hackelman reported on the recent fire safety discussions and a site visit meeting hosted by Republic Services. The objective was to explore actionable recommendations to help the Adair Rural Fire Department and others prepare for and respond to potential fire incidents at the landfill.

Key conclusions included:

- During non-operational hours, especially in fire season, there should be systems in place to monitor for fires.
- Monitoring could be done through personnel observations or through automated systems such as video surveillance or infrared camera technology.
- Forward-looking infrared (FLIR) cameras were discussed, though David noted that even standard surveillance cameras may suffice for detection purposes.

- More advanced options, including autonomous systems that detect and respond to fires, may also be considered.

David emphasized the importance of identifying reliable methods to alert responders promptly and mitigate any fire threats before they escalate.

Additional Security Considerations:

A Republic representative added that the site has recently experienced unauthorized access issues. As a result, they are considering expanding security measures, including increased patrols at both Coffin Butte and PRC. These patrols could serve dual purposes: increasing site security and acting as a fire watch during off-hours. This boots-on-the-ground approach was identified as potentially more immediate and reliable than full reliance on technology.

The committee acknowledged that having physical personnel on site may offer a more immediate response capability while complementing any future technology-based solutions.

Communication with Board of Commissioners:

- It was suggested that the Commissioners be updated about ongoing efforts to improve fire safety, especially with fire season approaching.
- There was consensus on preparing a progress update to inform the Board that work is ongoing.
- Possible strategies under review include camera surveillance, night security, or fire lookout presence after hours.
- Timeline considerations:
 - Some options (e.g., hiring personnel) could be implemented faster than others (e.g., installing specialized equipment like FLIR cameras).
 - An internal discussion is scheduled for next month to further evaluate options and determine a preferred approach.
 - A formal update is expected to be ready following that discussion.

Action Items:

- Hackleman will draft a written update for the Board of Commissioners that Payne will bring to the BOC.

6. Meeting Break: The committee agreed to take a short break before proceeding with the remaining items on the agenda.

7. Agenda Item: Landfill Expansion Proposal – Conditional Use Permit (CUP)

The second half of the meeting focused on deliberation regarding the landfill expansion proposal and whether the committee should submit formal input to the Benton County Planning Commission during their upcoming review process.

Chair Purcell clarified that while individual members of the committee are free to provide public comment independently, any formal committee input must be deliberated and decided during public meetings in compliance with state regulations on public entities.

The Planning Commission has opened a public comment period and invited the committee to participate. A formal report or collective comment from this body could be valuable, considering the committee's expertise.

Key Points Raised:

- **Chuck's Input:** Chuck emphasized that many technical and environmental aspects of the expansion are already being addressed by DEQ and other agencies. He suggested the committee consider a broader philosophical or strategic perspective—questioning what the future of the landfill looks like, including lifespan and capacity concerns. He noted that the expansion could shorten the landfill's service life without expanding its physical footprint due to existing zoning limitations.
- **Zoning and Land Use Context:**
There was clarification around the zoning designation established in 1983 for the landfill area, including references to the need for a land zone action for future expansions. The committee reviewed the two primary land use criteria for CUP decisions:
 1. Compatibility with adjacent property use, area character, and zoning purpose.
 2. Lack of undue burden on public infrastructure and services.

The chair proposed gauging where members currently stand on the issue—either through a straw poll or an open roundtable. There was agreement to proceed with a roundtable-style check-in.

- **Member Paul Koster** (an employee of Republic Services) requested the opportunity to abstain from making any definitive comments but was willing to remain present to

answer broader or technical questions if needed. He expressed a commitment to staying part of the process while not contributing personal opinions at this stage.

- A member highlighted that those who received direct notice of the expansion (e.g., adjacent landowners) should feel empowered to participate individually. However, the role of the committee is distinct, and if it is to function cohesively, it must continue discussions collectively and transparently.

Discussion on Landfill Philosophy and Future Planning

- A member expressed concern that landfill expansion may discourage surrounding communities from addressing their own waste challenges, potentially leading to an over-reliance on a centralized facility.
- Highlighted that a broader acceptance of external waste might reduce regional accountability and public awareness of long-term waste issues.
- Stressed the importance of the committee's focus being on mitigating potential negative environmental impacts of the landfill.
- Carroll suggested that actions aligned with the committee's charter, including possibly issuing a formal statement on these concerns.
- Carroll agreed with Chuck's earlier point that future planning is essential: once the current landfill reaches capacity, a new plan or location must be identified.
- Carroll commended David's eloquence in outlining the broader societal context of landfill use and public awareness.
- Carroll feels that removing the landfill from public visibility reduces accountability and concern, citing past practices such as backyard garbage burning to illustrate changing public perception.
- Carroll noted the absence of a Solid Waste Advisory Committee and pointed out that while ENRAC has completed its role and will send a letter concerning the CUP (Conditional Use Permit) next week, DSAC has its own unique mandate.
- Carroll proposed that DSAC should submit a statement acknowledging the eventual end-of-life of the landfill and advocating for proactive planning—regardless of the CUP outcome.
- Charli Carroll emphasized DSAC's interest in understanding long-term solutions beyond the life of the current landfill, regardless of whether the current CUP

expansion is approved. She raised the question of future landfill siting and the necessity of having a plan in place when the current landfill reaches capacity.

- Chair Purcell encouraged the committee to consider what input would be most useful to the Planning Commission—namely, insights grounded in the specific criteria they must use to make a decision. She suggested avoiding abstract philosophical discussions and instead focusing on practical, actionable data, such as the landfill's projected lifespan with or without the expansion.
- Charli Carroll agreed but reiterated that even if not part of the CUP process, the Planning Commission could recommend long-term planning for alternative landfill sites, as service providers like Republic Services will ultimately need a backup plan. She also mentioned the current landfill's location on wetlands, framing it as an inherited land use issue that could inform future policy.
- The chair acknowledged that DSAC might not take a formal position for or against the CUP but could serve a valuable role by supplying factual context and raising considerations for long-term policy planning.
- Livelay echoed previous sentiments, sharing that his reason for serving on the committee stemmed from concern for the character of Benton County. He expressed opposition to the county serving as a regional landfill for the Willamette Valley.
 - He stressed the importance of broader, long-term thinking around solid waste and recycling solutions.
 - While reiterating his intent to serve objectively on the committee, he maintained that the current CUP discussion is ultimately a short-term issue and hoped the committee's input could help the Planning Commission and County Commissioners develop sustainable long-term policies.
 - He supported providing information, not opinion, that would help shape a broader policy framework in line with the county's values and environmental integrity.

-
- Benton County Community Development also pointed out that the Planning Commission has a specific deadline for feedback by April 17th which is before the next meeting. The committee was advised to provide written communication by that date. A representative could also be appointed to present any information at the April 29th hearing, where the Planning Commission will review the CUP.

- The facilitator suggested that if DSAC is acting as an informational body, its role would be to provide relevant, factual information to assist the Planning Commission in making a decision. To ensure the committee's input is effective, the facilitator recommended clarifying specific questions that DSAC would want to address in their feedback.
- Further Considerations:
 - The lifetime of the landfill site with and without the expansion.
 - Potential conditions for the CUP approval (e.g., could the expansion be approved with a cap still in place?).
- Paul Koster and Bret Davis mentioned the significant waste volume spikes (e.g., the 2017 increase due to a neighboring landfill closure) but emphasized that the franchisee isn't actively chasing volume; instead, they seek dirt for covering trash. He noted that waste transport decisions are made based on cost-effectiveness and logistical factors, not necessarily a desire to increase waste volume.
- Bret Davis clarified that the landfill is not looking to pull in waste from outside the region (e.g., Seattle). The landfill service area is primarily local, though growth in the region will naturally lead to increased waste generation as new homes are built. However, he doesn't foresee drastic increases in waste volumes like the major spike seen in 2017, which was caused by a neighboring landfill closure.
- Concerns were raised about the broader issue of waste management, particularly related to methane emissions, leachate, and biosolids. These are issues facing landfills across the country, not just in Benton County. An article from The New York Times that discusses how landfills' contributions to these problems have been underestimated in the past was referenced. It was emphasized that these are challenges every community will face as landfills close, and the question becomes: where will the waste go?
- It was noted that many communities are grappling with these environmental issues and the associated costs, including the long-term risks of leachate (contaminated liquid) and hazardous materials like PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances). It was pointed out that once a landfill is capped, the county will be responsible for managing the risks, and it may be decades before the full environmental costs are known. A parallel between landfills and future Superfund sites was made, suggesting that landfills could very well become tomorrow's environmental disasters. While residents of Benton County may not face these costs immediately,

the long-term environmental impact is something that will ultimately be borne by future generations. There needs to be more focus on long-term solutions.

- Payne explained that the county has already initiated a Solid Waste Management Plan, which involves coordination with neighboring municipalities, from Lane County to Portland and west to the coast. This plan is expected to be completed by the end of June. Additionally, a House Bill introduced by local representative Sarah Finger McDonald aims to establish a State-level Sustainable Materials Management Plan, which would build on the efforts of the current group. More information on this effort will be available in the coming months. Payne concluded by sharing that a significant document, 86 pages long, has already been prepared that outlines alternatives and future strategies for waste management in the region. This document will guide the county's approach to waste management and is focused on long-term sustainability.
-

- **Regional Impact:**

- The expansion decision is seen as impacting not just Benton County but the broader region, including counties such as Tillamook, Yamhill, and Lincoln, which rely heavily on Coffin Butte for waste disposal.
- The issue of regional waste management is highlighted, emphasizing that the responsibility falls on Benton County but the problem is much broader.
- A significant question remains: if the landfill expansion is not approved, this could put immense pressure on Benton County and other regional counties that rely on Coffin Butte.

- **Planning Commission Concerns and Public Feedback:**

- It was noted that the planning commissioners would likely receive concerns from the public. The group discussed whether summarizing these concerns for the commissioners would be helpful.
 - The consensus was that summarizing the concerns raised by the public would likely be valuable, even if the commissioners would receive them independently.
-

Landfill Criteria and Financial Impact

- **Land Use Criteria:** The committee discussed the specific criteria used in making land use decisions for landfill expansion. One key point discussed was whether the use of the landfill interferes with adjacent properties. There was a consensus that while adjacent property owners could make arguments based on proximity to the landfill, it is the responsibility of the planning commission to evaluate these criteria.
- **Contaminants and Property Value Concerns:** Concerns were raised about potential contamination from the landfill, including aerosols, gases, and leachate. The committee questioned how such contamination could affect property values for residents living near the landfill. The issue of future land sales and whether homeowners could be burdened by contamination from the landfill was discussed, with specific reference to PFAS and the long-term environmental impacts.
- **Financial Considerations for Benton County:** The discussion also shifted to the financial impact on Benton County. The county derives income from the landfill, and there were questions about whether the devaluation of properties near the landfill would be a significant financial burden. However, the committee noted that the number of affected properties is limited and thus unlikely to significantly impact the county's finances.
- **Revenue from Landfill Operations:** It was noted that the landfill provides revenue to the county, which may help offset operational costs like fire department services, road maintenance, and other local needs. The financial implications of the landfill's location were emphasized, particularly for those who benefit from lower costs of waste services due to proximity to the landfill.

Long-Term Environmental Considerations

- **Environmental Concerns:** The committee discussed environmental risks associated with the landfill, including groundwater contamination, air quality, and impacts on vegetation. A previous tour of the landfill had revealed evidence of efforts to address contamination, such as the use of poplar trees for remediation. However, it was noted that there is a lack of specific data regarding the environmental footprint of the landfill in this area.
- **Post-Closure Operations:** There was a question raised about the future of the landfill once it is closed, particularly in regard to monitoring and maintenance. It was noted that the Republic Services will be required to continue monitoring the site for a minimum of 30 years after closure to ensure the containment of any residual contaminants.

Discussion on Public Input and Comment Submission

- **Public Comment Approach:** The committee discussed the practicality of submitting comments to the planning commission regarding the landfill expansion. Due to time constraints, it was proposed that committee members submit individual public comments, but not on behalf of the Benton County Disposal Site Advisory Committee (DSAC). This would allow individual perspectives to be shared without necessitating the creation of a formal, collective response from the committee.
 - **Clarification of Role:** The committee agreed that DSAC's role is more focused on monitoring landfill operations and working with the site owner rather than taking an active role in submitting official comments on land use proposals. Members were reminded to make it clear in their individual submissions that they were not representing the committee in any formal capacity.
-

Submission of Input and Reporting to Planning Commission

- **Summary of Public Input:** The idea was raised that while the committee would not submit a formal letter or comment as DSAC, they should at least provide a summary of public input they have received. This would ensure the planning commission is aware of the community concerns regarding the landfill, even if DSAC itself was not submitting a formal stance.
- **Rationale for Summary Submission:** There was general agreement that while the committee may not be taking an official position, sharing the input received from the public could be beneficial. This would allow the planning commission to have a fuller picture of the concerns raised by local residents and other stakeholders.

Proposal for Subcommittee to Draft a Letter

- **Public Input Summary:** It was proposed that the committee write a letter summarizing public input received regarding the landfill site. One suggestion was to review reports from the past few years and compile them into a single document, which could be submitted to the Planning Commission in case they did not have all the relevant information.
- **Due to the short deadline of 9 days before the 17th,** the full committee would not have sufficient time to review the letter. Therefore, the subcommittee would take responsibility for the letter's content. The subcommittee was authorized to make final decisions regarding the letter and submit it to the Planning Commission. All committee members supported this approach.

- **Appointment of Subcommittee:** The committee agreed to appoint a subcommittee to work on the letter summarizing the public input regarding the landfill. This subcommittee would be tasked with drafting and submitting the letter before the upcoming deadline. It was agreed that a subcommittee consisting of Charlie Carroll, Dave Livesay and Rachel Purcell would work together to draft and send the letter to the Planning Commission.
-

Committee's Role and Function

- **Clarification of Committee's Purpose:** Jennifer Field expressed frustration with the lack of clarity about the committee's role. Despite being on the committee since July, they were unsure of what their responsibilities were. The committee's focus seemed to be on operational concerns, such as scale issues and staffing, but this may leave members feeling like these issues were relatively minor and did not require their involvement.
-

Updates on Landfill Operations and Monitoring

- **Landfill gas Monitoring Efforts:** Paul Koster shared an update on the ongoing efforts to monitor gas at the landfill, mentioning the recent installation of 16 new wells as part of an ongoing program to improve coverage. The installation was part of efforts to address concerns about potential contamination and ensure that the landfill's operations were being adequately monitored.
-

9. Adjournment

- With no further agenda items, the meeting was adjourned.

Motion to adjourn: Charli Carroll

Seconded by: David Livesay

All in favor.

Next Steps:

1. Jennifer to present on PFAS next meeting.

2. Paul to continue coordinating with hydrology consultant and explore Zoom presentation option.
3. Summarize the public concerns for the planning commission, ensuring that input is relevant and within the scope of land use decisions.
4. Written Feedback: The committee will submit a short letter to the Planning Commission by April 17th, addressing key concerns and providing factual information that can assist the Planning Commission in evaluating the expansion proposal.
5. Key Questions for Planning Commission:
 1. The projected lifespan of the landfill with and without the proposed expansion.
 2. The potential impacts of lifting the cap on the landfill and whether specific conditions could be imposed to mitigate those impacts.
 3. The importance of considering alternative waste management options in the long term.
6. Further clarify the post-closure monitoring and operations requirements for the landfill.
7. Continue focusing on ensuring compatibility between landfill operations and county infrastructure (roads, safety, etc.), regardless of whether the expansion is approved.
8. Monitor the ongoing development of the State-level Sustainable Materials Management Plan.
9. Long-Term Focus: The committee should continue to focus on long-term strategies for waste management and landfill sustainability, acknowledging the potential for future environmental risks and costs.
10. Continue evaluating both technological and manual methods for fire detection and site monitoring. A comparison with U.S. Forest Service practices is underway to assess the feasibility of using a similar system to monitor landfill fires.
11. Email of Charter: The committee agreed to review the formal charter (bylaws) to ensure everyone understood their roles and responsibilities moving forward.