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Memorandum

ATTACHMENT 1

To: Rosemary Waldorf  
Mayor, Town of Chapel Hill

From: Jan Sassaman and Albert Vickers  
Chapel Hill Representatives  
Orange County Solid Waste Advisory Board

Subject: Solid Waste Advisory Board's Response to Town's Request for Increased Commercial Recycling Services from Orange County Solid Waste Management Department

Date: November 20, 2001

The Solid Waste Advisory Board (SWAB) met on November 8 and considered the request of the Town of Chapel Hill for increased recycling services and pilot studies, based on your letter to us dated October 5, 2001. This memorandum is a summary of SWAB's recommendations with respect to that request. We have attached a report from the Orange County Solid Waste Management Department that contains some technical details that support the SWAB's recommendations.

**1. Pilot mixed paper collection at one or two multifamily sites and a commercial site.**

The SWAB recommends support of this pilot project at one commercial site and up to two multifamily sites through June 30, 2002. The program could begin as soon as mutually agreeable sites are selected. The Solid Waste Management Department would provide the dumpsters and necessary signs, and would service them, as well as provide a commercial waste audit and on-site education to determine the potential for waste reduction (see items #2 and #3). After June 30, Solid Waste staff will conclude the pilot project at the three sites and prepare a report regarding waste reduction findings.

**2. Expand current recycling program at a select multifamily site.**

The SWAB recommends a pilot project to determine if more intensive recycling at a current multifamily site within the current program would increase recycling tonnage. Over 20 percent of what is now disposed of as garbage from the multifamily sector is readily recyclable in the current program. We recommend that this effort begin during the current FY, following establishment of a baseline waste generation rate at the targeted complex, and continue as long as it is effective. Funds are available within the current Solid Waste Department budget for this effort.

The SWAB recommends that this expansion take place at one large complex (over 150 units), preferably the same one that the mixed paper program is placed at, to further waste

diversion. This complex would be the target of intensive recycling and waste reduction education along with expanded recycling opportunities. The Solid Waste Department may consider issuing residential recycling containers at that complex to further the effort.

The SWAB is aware that while over 90 percent of apartment complexes have recycling on-site, most have far fewer recycling sites than dumpsters for waste disposal. A key component of the effort we recommend would be to place as many recycling sites as possible as conveniently as possible to the majority of residents of a complex and determine, by measuring waste generation at that complex before and after the expansion of recycling, how effective this approach was to increasing waste diversion.

### **3. Provide a waste audit at targeted commercial complex.**

The SWAB recommends that the Solid Waste Department carry out a waste audit at a targeted commercial complex prior to the installation of mixed paper recycling services (see item #1). A waste audit determines a baseline generation rate, categorizes the types of wastes that are generated in operation of a facility, and identifies ways to better manage those materials. Improved materials management could include not only recycling, but also other waste reduction efforts, such as reducing office junk mail and double-sided copying. The waste audit would determine a waste generation baseline. A subsequent re-audit in July 2002 would determine how effective the program had been.

### **4. Create pilot program for commercial food waste, can and bottle collection programs:**

The SWAB recommends against conducting this pilot program, as proposed, at County expense. If the Town wishes to fund an expansion of only the food waste program solely for restaurants in Chapel Hill, the County would be willing to use its current contractor to implement such an expansion at locations it targets in conjunction with the Town, assuming additional establishments meeting food waste program criteria can be identified. Unless additional funds for food waste recycling are provided by the Board of Commissioners in the FY 2001/02 budget, it is assumed that the Town would fund any interim program additions.

The SWAB has determined, from discussions with staff, that there is a sufficient base of evidence from the existing commercial can, bottle and food waste recycling program. Thus there is no need to conduct a further pilot study to determine the potential impact of recycling these materials on an establishment's waste generation rate. Solid waste management staff has over a year of data from the 100 bars and restaurants now on the can and bottle recycling collection program, plus the 15 collection points now on the food waste collection program to assist any business in determining its diversion potential.

The SWAB has assumed the Countywide adopted solid waste reduction goals and plan as the basis for planning solid waste programs in Orange County. The majority of unrealized potential for further recycling and waste reduction is in the commercial sector.

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The Town's implementation of a commercial volume-based-fee system could stimulate more pressure on expansion of commercial recycling efforts. There is no infrastructure to support broad commercial recycling collection or processing at this time. Thus the SWAB also recommends that the Town generally consider making a strong endorsement of a County effort to begin to determine how to finance and implement the already adopted plan for solid waste management.

Please let us know if you need anything further.

cc: Board of County Commissioners  
Gayle Wilson  
Blair Pollock