

**PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, RICHMOND CITY HALL**  
1401 Marina Way South, Richmond, CA  
December 1, 2011  
6:30 p.m.

**COMMISSION MEMBERS**

Charles Duncan, Chair	Sheryl Lane, Vice Chair
Jeff Lee, Secretary	Carol Teltschick-Fall
Ben Choi	Andrés Soto
Roberto Reyes	

The regular meeting was called to order by Chair Duncan at 6:33 p.m.

Vice Chair Lane led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Chair Duncan, Vice Chair Lane, Secretary Lee; Commissioners Choi, and Teltschick-Fall

**Absent:** Commissioners Reyes and Soto

**INTRODUCTIONS**

**Staff Present:** Lamont Thompson, Lina Velasco, Richard Mitchell, Shasa Curl, and Carlos Privat

Chair Duncan recognized the retirement of Lamont Thompson and thanked him for his work, expertise and commitment with the City and the Planning Commission. Commissioners individually recognized Mr. Thompson for his work and wished him well in his retirement.

**MINUTES**

October 20, 2011

**ACTION: It was M/S (Lane/Choi) to approve the minutes of October 20, 2011; unanimously carried.**

November 3, 2011

**ACTION: It was M/S (Lane/Lee) to approve the minutes of November 3, 2011; unanimously carried.**

**CONSENT CALENDAR – No Items**

Chair Duncan stated there is one item on the agenda, which is a study session. There are no action items, but testimony will be taken after the presentation is made.

## **Brown Act – Public Forum – No Speakers**

- 1. PLN11-607: WEST CONTRA COSTA COUNTY SANITARY LANDFILL - PRESENTATION** by Republic Services on the West Contra Costa Sanitary Landfill facility at 1 Parr Blvd. (APN: 408140009, 408140008, 408140010, 408140013). CRR, Community and Regional Recreation District. West County Landfill Inc., owner; Republic Services, applicant. Planner: Lina Velasco

Ms. Velasco stated an informational presentation will be given by Republic Services. An overview of the operations of the West Contra Costa Sanitary Landfill will be given to prepare the Commission in advance of a future meeting date in which the City will be conducting a compliance review with their conditions of approval for a Conditional Use Permit issued in 2004. The CUP requires that every 5 year, compliance review take place. To build a better understanding of operations, staff thinks it would be beneficial for the Commission to have an informational presentation and staff will be returning early next year in February to make the formal presentation on compliance of the CUP. Peter Nuti, Division Manager at Republic Services is present, as well as Zachary Venable who is an Environmental Specialist who will do the presentation and answering any questions from the public or Commission.

Secretary Lee questioned why the review is two years overdue. Ms. Velasco stated the requirement is that after operations began, and staff is approximately six months off from that deadline. Chair Duncan clarified that the facility was actually up and running in 2006.

Peter Nuti, Division Manager, West County Landfill, stated that Mr. Venable would give a PowerPoint presentation which is an overview of current operations which will show how the site was transformed from a disposal facility into a resource recovery and/or recycling facility. He stated that the West County Landfill and Golden Bear Transfer Station and organics material processing facility is all post-collection. This is an operation after materials have been collected from the homeowner and brought to them or through collection vehicles via Richmond Sanitary or other customers coming to the facility.

Zach Venable, Environmental Specialist, gave the PowerPoint presentation on the landfill's establishment in 1953, stating they stopped accepting waste in September 2006. There are approximately 13 million tons in place at the facility. From 2006 to 2011, they carried out final closure and capping activities, received their certification from Cal Recycle, Contra Costa County Local Enforcement Agency, and the Regional Water Quality Control Board which are the lead agencies that directly govern the landfill in conjunction with the City of Richmond and other governing bodies.

He presented information on the landfill's closure and capping activities, stating it is mostly the top portions of the landfill that have been closed within the last few years, but significant portions were closed prior to this final closure event. He described how they cap and close a landfill and said it is made up of three engineered layers of fill; a foundation to achieve a final grade; compacted clay to prevent water intrusion into the landfill which creates leachate and landfill gas; and the third layer is to grow plants, promotion of natural habitat, and prevention of erosion of the other two layers. It is typical to reposition the scale buildings and customer acceptance areas, depending on where they may be operating. When they were closed, they decided to finalize the front entrance and make it more convenient for customers. He presented and described the before and after pictures of the front entrance project.

Mr. Venable stated they still have a commitment to the community to accept local waste and manage it accordingly, in a sanitary fashion. He said the bulk of the facility consists of the Golden Bear Transfer Station where all waste is accepted. They try to do a lot of source separation to pull out recyclable materials. They have the West County Organics Processing Facility where all green bin waste goes. They chip and grind the organic material, process it, and transport it to their composting facility. They also generate all of their own electricity and are completely self-sufficient through extraction of gas from the landfill and use it as a fuel, and run it through reciprocating engines to generate electricity.

Mr. Nuti explained that the IRRF is located two blocks east of the landfill and this is where they handle all curbside recycling, such as bottles, cans, newspapers, cardboard and plastic. It is also the site for their permanent household hazardous waste facility where residents can come and bring in their hazardous waste such as light bulbs and unused pharmaceuticals. The facility also has a buy-back facility for cans, plastic and glass. The garbage goes through Golden Bear Transfer Station and now that they have the organics processing facility, some material that goes through Golden Bear is separated on the floor and brought up to the organics processing facility to achieve higher diversion. The green waste container goes directly to the organics processing facility where it is composted.

Mr. Venable presented a graphic of the facility where they accept franchise and commercial garbage and residential self-hauls. They currently employ 39 full-time people; operate 7 days a week, 7-5 Monday through Friday and 9-5 Saturday and Sunday. Regarding acceptance, he presented information on the amounts of waste over the years, noting a sharp decline from 2008 to 2009, as well as declines in 2010 and 2011 some of which has to do with the economy and some due to heightened recycling programs. They also have a construction and debris recycling area at the landfill. On average 43% of the waste that comes into the transfer facility is from the City of Richmond.

Regarding recycling, Mr. Venable displayed and described the source recycling on the transfer station floor, which is a high volume waste facility. They have a household hazardous waste load program which is to screen waste for hazardous and/or harmful loads. They will screen 5-10 vehicles per day to manage the general waste stream to prevent risk to public health and to ensure they are not transporting hazardous waste in any of their trucks when they transport it to landfills that are still open. Even though these are hazardous wastes, they do their best to recycle as much of the waste as possible. They have a free service for local communities to accept household hazardous waste at 101 Pittsburg Avenue, on the first Saturday of every month. From 2006-2011, they extracted about 2,000 tons of hazardous waste from the waste stream.

Regarding their organics materials processing facility, the facility was established in 2009. They did do composting before, but unfortunately they had to suspend the facility while they prepped the area and closed and capped the landfill. They still operated a small chip and grind facility to keep that waste out of the general waste stream, to keep diversion numbers up, and to use chip and grind material to provide erosion control during capping.

They accept anywhere from 200-600 tons of green material everyday from all sources mentioned, have a food waste composting program with Richmond, San Pablo and El Cerrito, with the unincorporated areas scheduled to begin in 2012, as well as with the hopes for the entire region to do food waste composting. He presented their tonnage summary for their organics facility. In 2010, they experienced an increase from 2009, and 2011 looks to be their best year thus far.

Mr. Venable presented their actual compost generation operation and area which resumed in 2010. They operate a very low cost soil amendment solution option for the community versus a retail cost. One cubic yard of material will cost only \$22 versus \$141 at a local retail store. Since resuming operations, they have held various public give-away events in different cities to promote green use instead of fertilizers and to get people used to their product. This facility diverts waste from landfills which adds to the community's green portfolio. In addition, recycled water is used to feed compost.

Regarding construction debris and demolition sorting and recycling facility, they have done a lot of source separation and restarted it this year. Once they got the green organics materials processing facility back up and running well, they focused on other areas where they could do waste diversion and this was one of them. They separate various materials, mainly from construction debris and demolition loads prior to sending them to the transfer station. It provides contractors and construction firms a local source. There are many communities adopting diversion programs and requirements before issuing construction contracts and they can offer a CD recycling certificate should a contractor need approval of recycled materials.

In addition, because they generate all their own power, their entire site is self-sufficient. The sort line is 100% electrical. Mr. Nuti stated they recently received certification from the City and County, and San Francisco is one facility where they can process materials, as they can meet their diversion requirements. They have also applied to Marin County's group to get the same certification and are now in the process of working with StopWaste.org to receive their certification and get on their list as an approved site for construction and demolition debris recycling.

Mr. Venable said since they have resumed operations this year, they accepted a total of about 11,000 tons; 57% of which came from the City of Richmond. He presented a list of materials which are sorted through, such as concrete, metal, plastic, cardboard, gypsum, organic materials.

Regarding their electrical generation, they produced their own electricity for a long time, were one of the first facilities to make their own electricity and run off of landfill gas since 1986, they generate 3 megawatts of electricity exclusively fueled by landfill gas, and they do not do any supplementary landfill gas to run their facility. He described how they extract gas from the landfill by drilling wells in the waste prism to allow gas through and feed into the power plant. Methane is the fuel to run the power plant, and their facility converts it into carbon dioxide, which prevents it from entering the atmosphere. They consume approximately 10% of the total power generated and the remainder is exported to the power grid. There is enough exported to energize about 1,500 houses and enough landfill gas in the facility to feed their current setup until about 2025.

Mr. Nuti said most proud is their completion of the landfill loop of the Bay Trail, worked closely with TRAC to get this completed, and the actual inauguration of the loop was April 30, 2010, and their entrance project was the final phase of connecting both ends of the southern entrance to the landfill loop to the northern entrance. It is a paved area that takes one from the parking lot to either trail head. They added an upper trail which gives them some fantastic views of San Francisco Bay and he encouraged Commissioners to go for a walk along the trail. They opened in April last year and are now getting final signage in place.

Mr. Venable stated Section 1 of the Bay Trail had been open for some time and there were plans in place to complete the loop all the way around the landfill. It is about 3.1 miles. They had

the inaugural ribbon-cutting ceremony on April 30, 2011 where 150 people attended and did a ceremonial walk around the loop. They worked in conjunction with TRAC, provided funding to develop interpretive and educational signage which is placed at some of the best viewing points, and they also installed many park benches, garbage cans, and picnic tables throughout the trail, there is a portable toilet at the entrance and ample parking and bike racks. The trail is open during their regular facility hours, and he presented pictures of some of the views from the trail.

In conclusion, Mr. Venable stated the Golden Bear Transfer Station will serve the community a long time. They look to expand recycling and diversion operations as much as possible, they are looking at alternative land uses such as solar, wind and greenhouse projects, and their formal plan is to complete their compliance review the first quarter of 2012.

Chair Duncan said the Commission received a series of questions from Shasa Curl in the City Manager's Office, as well as others which he compiled. He suggested addressing these first, said some have already been answered.

Chair Duncan questioned the amount of local hiring, and Mr. Nuti said he was unsure, but could follow-up with this information.

Vice Chair Lane said Mr. Venable mentioned that part of the demolition & construction materials involves other municipalities, and she questioned whether there will be an opportunity for more jobs or will they maintain the same number of employees. Mr. Nuti said it all depends upon the amount of tonnage that comes in. As it increases, staffing levels will be increased. He anticipates the answer is yes as more and more diversion activities happen.

Commissioners asked the following questions:

1. What is the history of C&D diversion at the Golden Bear Transfer Station and what has been the diversion rate over the past few years? (Duncan)

Mr. Nuti stated they are in the process of compiling the compliance report which will answer this specifically. C&D only recently has come to the forefront of recycling. In the past, C&D has been mostly wood diverted from a transfer station. What they have done with development of the organics processing facility. They have the infrastructure in place between the transfer station for the solid waste, the processing facility for the organics and are able to not only do a floor sort but also able to start diverting loads directly from the scale house to the organics facility. They are in the process of identifying a tracking method to help identify where materials are going for reporting purposes.

2. What is the Golden Bear Transfer Station's capacity to process mixed incoming loads of construction and demolition. This capacity is important because many projects will generate mixed material instead of separated loads. (Choi)

Mr. Nuti clarified that Golden Bear Transfer Station will not be processing C&D; this is through West County Landfill's organics processing facility. The C&D sorting line is a simple operation and purely a function of the amount of people and the throughput of material. When fully staffed, they can run about 20 tons per hour and get an effective sort from that. They are able to grow as the tonnage increases.

3. If the City of Richmond passes a construction and demolition ordinance, will Republic Services have the capacity to process the resulting increased amount of construction and demolition debris at the transfer station? (Lane).

Mr. Nuti stated yes.

4. Are you responsible for curb-side pickup? (Lee)

Mr. Nuti stated no, the single hauling company responsible for the City of Richmond is Richmond Sanitary Service.

5. What is the difference between Golden Bear Transfer Station and an adjacent facility called the Integrated Resource Recovery Facility (IRRF) that is also operated by Republic Services? (Teltschick-Fall)

Mr. Nuti stated it is a combined effort; the landfill will handle the bulkier items and more commercial material. The IRRF is the primary sorting facility for all curbside material put in blue containers. They recycle all glass, newspapers, junk mail, cardboard, and also houses the household hazardous waste facility, which collects paint, pharmaceuticals, fluorescent tubes, herbicides, pool chemicals, fertilizers, etc. When they run their C&D line on plastic, the IRRF has a greater capacity to separate those plastics into a marketable material so they can get it to the secondary market for re-use. The IRRF also has bailing and shipping capabilities to where the markets are.

Commissioner Teltschick-Fall asked for the location of where materials go, and Mr. Nuti stated for this area, Golden Bear materials go to Keller Canyon which is out in Pittsburg. Their transfer trucks also go to Vasco Road to their other landfill in Alameda County. They also use Potrero Hills Landfill in Solano County.

6. What is Richmond's diversion rate compared to other leading Bay Area cities and jurisdictions over the last five years, such as San Francisco, Berkeley, StopWaste.org, etc? (Choi)

Mr. Nuti said this is complicated, but they can address it in the compliance report. The question is best addressed by the Executive Director of the JPA for West County because they report diversion on Richmond's behalf on a regional basis, along with other West County communities.

7. How does Republic Services intend to comply with mandatory commercial recycling for AB 32? (Lane)

Mr. Nuti said part of this was the start-up of their C&D line. As far as their other operations, they are constantly looking at new equipment to process material as other recycling programs are suggested. Right now they are able to recycle concrete, dirt, green waste to food waste, wood, plastics, and some of the other facilities will include restaurants on a more comprehensive food waste program. It is mainly looking at how they can recycle more materials. He said this is from the point of after it is collected. They are the recycling arm of the company that handles the material post collection. As they start seeing different programs coming into place, they will handle it from a processing capability. The latest one is food waste recycling at restaurants. Currently, their organics facility can handle that once those services are put into place with restaurants.

8. Is it appropriate and if so, would the Golden Bear Transfer Station consider obtaining a green business certification? (Lee)

Mr. Nuti said yes.

*Additional Questions of the Commission:*

Vice Chair Lane referred to composting and asked what else is done with composting other than that purchased by residents. Mr. Nuti said they have their first large supply coming in now, as most people will start doing soil amendments for their gardens. They are working with the Waste Authority to get compost to urban gardeners, stated the City's landscapers use it for median strips, and they are able to deliver in bulk to manufacturers or retailers that sell it in bulk, and they sell to local gardeners and landscapers.

Vice Chair Lane questioned if compost is ever donated? Mr. Nuti said yes; they donate it as well as sell it to landscapers and wholesalers for the larger consumer.

Secretary Lee asked if the price of \$22 per yard was the price they wholesale it to businesses. Mr. Nuti said if a business wanted to pick up 200-300 cubic yards, no, there would be a better price. Secretary Lee asked if the intent was not to accumulate more than what is typically sold on site. Mr. Nuti said it is their intent to put back the finished composting back into use as a product and soil amendment. He said they still have the responsibility on a closed landfill to maintain soil integrity, erosion control and their own landscaping, but the intent is that as it is produced to sell the material or make it available for use by the public and others.

Secretary Lee said 50% of the gas that comes out is methane, and he asked what happens to the remainder of gas that comes out? Mr. Venable said the remaining 50% is mostly comprised of carbon dioxide. Depending on how efficiently the system is running, anywhere from 0 to 2% of this can be oxygen, and the rest is mostly trace nitrogen. Secretary Lee asked if it was anything that the EPA is involved in, and Mr. Venable said not necessarily; there is the new source performance standards on the federal level that governs gases and landfills and the BAAQMD that directly manages them. There is considerable regulatory oversight and many regulations they must comply with in operating the system.

Commissioner Teltschick-Fall asked what the foundation layer was made out of. Mr. Venable said it's comprised of soils that are more mixed, with earthy materials and sand, but not considerable amounts of clay. The clay must be compacted and achieve an impressive rate—at 10 to the minus 7, which is how long it takes for water to pass through the clay once compacted. He said it is not the best to do anything other than to achieve a good surface to lay clay on top of. He clarified that the thicknesses of the layers varies from region to region, but typically it is anywhere from 2-4 feet of foundation. They can have up to 2-3 feet of clay and sometimes a clay layer will be substituted with a geo-membrane or plastic membrane, and the vegetative layer is from 12 to 36 inches.

Commissioner Teltschick-Fall said she was curious regarding use and electricity back to the grid. She confirmed they were selling it back to PG&E. She asked when screening for hazardous waste at the drop-offs, she asked if they are checked at random. Mr. Venable said yes; they are random load checks at varying times throughout the day.

Commissioner Teltschick-Fall asked whether the food pick up in containers were animal proof, and Mr. Nuti stated they are okay for rats, but he was not sure they were raccoon proof.

Commissioner Teltschick-Fall asked that in terms of services, she wondered how services, costs and fees compare to services in other nearby cities such as Oakland, Alameda and Albany. She understands that in San Leandro, a resident can call and get wood chips and/or soil deliveries whenever they want for free. Mr. Nuti said if they had a high demand for compost deliveries, they could look at it and determine whether or not it could be accommodated, but they have not had a huge demand for it. They have wood chips and also bring them down to their sister company in Milpitas and they will colorize it. Some of this is on site, but they have not finished the marketing plan on it to make it available to the public as of yet, but are in beginning discussions with landscapers as to whether they are willing to use this product. He confirmed they would be selling it versus giving it away.

Chair Duncan said the fuel source from the landfill will be exhausted in 2025. He asked what they plan to do after that to power the equipment. Mr. Nuti said they are looking at solar, wind and greenhouse opportunities. They have a unique situation with the closed landfill, but there are some foundation issues they have to be concerned with. Their engineers are studying the different technologies to help supplement what they are doing.

Chair Duncan asked if the Commission will receive the compliance report before the CUP re-issuance, and Ms. Velasco said staff will determine how in advance it will be issued, but she would anticipate that as part of the compliance report, staff will do a report and presentation by the staff and operators to explain and hold another opportunity for questions. This will also be available on the City's website.

Chair Duncan called for public comment.

#### Public Comments:

Shasa Curl, City of Richmond City Manager's Office, said staff appreciates the partnership with the City and Republic Services to provide a presentation and said if there were any questions that could not be answered this evening, she would be happy to work with Republic Services to get them answered. Richmond Sanitary is owned by Republic Services so all collection and transfer ultimately rolls up to one parent company. Regarding items listed in the CUP, it would be helpful to have a better understanding of how we can use the C&D certificate program and implement that at the building permit counter. She said BAAQMD is also listed a number of times in the CUP as a regulatory entity, so it would be helpful in the final report if BAAQMD could weigh in as well; they have also been very helpful to City staff as they have worked on a number of environmental initiatives with them. It would be helpful to understand whether or not there are any air quality issues given the high rates of asthma in the Richmond community. She said it also might be helpful to go into more detail regarding the mitigation fund and how this has been operating. She understands that the CUP references an MOU but it also obviously provides for a number of services outlined in the CUP and it would be important to know those are being provided. As indicated in the report, there is a load inspection requirement, and it would be helpful to understand more in detail in terms of how random inspections are occurring. There is also reference to a material tracking and a scale that reference the Planning Director as approval of the scale. She was not sure this was something the Planning Department has done. The CUP also provides for a transportation and circulation plan, and she was not sure this has been submitted, as well as a road maintenance agreement, a litter control program, and provisions to address illegal dumping. She would appreciate planning staff working with the Commission and Golden Bear to address these items. Lastly, an off-site debris and litter policy is also called out, and she respectfully requests that all items mentioned which are called out in

more detail in the CUP be addressed in detail in order for staff to provide responses to the community as they continue to inquire regarding these matters.

Chris Lehon, Executive Director, Recycle More / West Contra Costa Integrated Waste Management Authority, said he sees the CUP as a vehicle with provisions that would basically increase diversion. He has provided a letter outlining some of the things he would like the Commission and staff to look into, primarily mixed waste diversion which has been at 5% diversion over the last 5 years. Prior to this, there was a landfill waste shuttle pad the facility used and diverted a lot more material prior to the close of the landfill. He also said the previous management at the landfill was not very receptive to many diversion activities; however, he has a lot of confidence in Peter Nuti because he comes from a recycling background to do something about this. He also commented on the 'best efforts' definition in Condition 17-2 and in figuring out what they are, what is economically feasible to maximize diversion, how this is defined and evaluating 'economically feasible'.

Chair Duncan questioned if Mr. Lehon has transmitted the letter to Mr. Nuti, and Mr. Lehon provided a copy to him.

Secretary Lee asked if Recycle More was a government agency. Mr. Lehon stated they are a JPA (Joint Powers Authority) comprised of 5 member cities in West County, as well as Contra Costa County.

Dr. Henry Clark, Executive Director, West County Toxics Coalition, Member of the North Richmond Advisory Council and member of the Contra Costa County Hazardous Materials Commission, stated he is quite familiar with the landfill after having grown up around it before it closed. At that time, there was an odor problem, most of the people who worked in North Richmond worked for Richmond Sanitary who served as a major employer. As chair of the mitigation committee, with Councilmember Beckles serving as the Vice Chair, approximately \$400,000 a year is put into the pot and non-profit groups in Richmond as unincorporated areas can apply to the fund for various beautification projects. He said he wants to ensure Republic Services maintain their commitments as did Richmond Sanitary under the CUP.

Vice Chair Lane referred to Dr. Clark's ending statements regarding the previous relationship with Richmond Sanitary as being maintained by Republic Services, and she asked if Dr. Clark believes the relationship is being maintained. Dr. Clark said he is not aware at this time that there are any problems.

Ms. Velasco summarized by thanking Republic Services for their presentation, advised that this is the first time this report is being completed so there is a slight learning curve by staff as well as the permittee. Staff is trying to make the report as user-friendly to both Commissioners and to the public. While is not a definitive date, they are targeting the first quarter of 2012 for its completion. They may reach out to the Commission to receive feedback on the report if staff believes direction is needed.

Vice Chair Lane stated there were questions asked of the public and by Commissioners, some directly related to what is presented in the compliance report. She asked how will these questions be addressed, and Ms. Velasco said some were directly related to conditions of approval. Staff may do a section in the report entitled, "Other Questions Raised During the Presentation" and have responses to those. As mentioned, there may be additional parties they may need to coordinate with to receive responses on actual pick-up and delivery, and will explain who the other parties are in garbage collection to help differentiate roles.

## **2. Reports of Officers, Board Members, and Staff**

Mr. Privat wished Mr. Thompson well.

Secretary Lee stated he visited his father in Florida and did go to his community's 9-member Planning Commission meeting and mentioned they were struggling with telecommunications ordinance and they had the same problem Richmond did.

Chair Duncan and Commissioners wished everybody a happy holiday.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.