

Groups discuss trash-to-energy recycling plant

Considered high-risk but
would help divert waste

BY BEN CONLEY

The Dominion Post

What does the future of trash and recycling collection look like in Monongalia County? Could a trash-to-energy facility be an economically and environmentally viable option?

The Monongalia County Commission plans to work with the county's solid waste authority (MCSWA), environmental consulting firm Downstream Strategies and stakeholders including the county's licensed waste haulers to begin answering those questions.

Hayward Helmick and Bob McConnell, of the MCSWA, were joined by Evan Hansen and Evan Fedorko, of Downstream Strategies, at Wednesday's regular commission meeting, where they reported on their ongoing multi-year study of emerging trash-to-energy technologies.

Hansen explained that this latest phase focused largely on looking at data gathering around existing practices.

For example, Monongalia County's recycling rate is roughly 5 percent — meaning of all the solid waste in the county, about 5 percent is recycled or diverted from the landfill. The national average, he said, is 26 percent.

"Even in Morgantown, where we have curb-side, single stream [recycling], I believe that diversion is only about 9 or 10 percent,"

WASTE

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Fedorko added, later noting that only about half of the city's trash and recycling customers ever actually received a recycling bin.

Morgantown's trash and recycling is handled

through Republic Services, with whom the city is entering a new, five-year contract. Westover and Star City have municipally run collections, as did Granville prior to signing on with Mountain State Waste, which operates out of Pennsylvania.

The county operates a free, voluntary, single-stream drop-off program on most Saturdays, at the 4H Camp Road Wal-Mart parking lot. Fedorko said there are also five haulers operating in the county, including Republic Services, Mountain State Waste, Main Sanitation, D&J Sanitation and Chissy's.

"We looked at two future scenarios for Mon County. One would be to dramatically increase the amount of recycling being done across the county, because we're actually recy-

cling quite little compared to the rest of the country," Hansen said. "The second scenario was, again, looking at the possibility of looking at a waste-to-energy plant."


While a waste-to-energy facility would divert a large percentage of the trash created locally, Fedorko explained that such facilities are very high-risk investments. He said there are no operating solid waste-based facilities in the U.S.

Commissioner Ed Hawkins said he would represent the commission in the discussions.

The commission also approved the first requisition for the University Town Centre tax increment finance (TIF) subordinate district excise tax revenue and improvement bonds, series 2017B.

County Administrator

Rennetta McClure explained that the requisition total is \$6,625,512.91.

 This is expenses that were incurred by the developer, and they have already paid those expenses to their vendors, and they are drawing down on the bonds," McClure said. "So the money isn't going directly to the developer, it's going to repay the bond."

In other commission news, the commission approved budget revisions for various county line-items, including: Law enforcement (\$4,321), prosecuting attorney (\$5,234), senior centers (\$20,000), health department (\$20,000) and In Touch & Concerned (\$5,000).

Lastly, Hawkins said the county historical society intends to sponsor a plaque for the courthouse square honoring the fallen soldiers on both sides of the Civil War.

"This is the last plaque, hopefully, that we can place on the Veteran's Memorial square because it really does represent the fact that this is the conflict of which our state was born," Hawkins said.

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