MEETING MINUTES

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY SOLID WASTE ADVISORY GROUP (SWAG)

April 9, 2026

ATTENDANCE

SWAG Members:

Present: Mark Bonner, Robert Boyt, James Gestrich, Bradley Kelly, Lynn Meadows, Tom Smith

Solid Waste Division Staff: Deborah Campbell, Tammy Gambita, Luke Hisghman

Absent: Joel Becker, Jane Wyman, Sidney "ST" Billingsley, Meadows, Arshdeep Pannu, Amritpal Singh, Keisha Strand

Guests: None

OPENING

Tammy Gambita called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. via Microsoft Teams

AGENDA TOPICS

Introductions and Agenda Overview – Tammy Gambita

Deborah Campbell, Communication Analyst; Tammy Gambita, Senior Environmental Program Manager; and Luke Highsman, Acting Assistant Director of Solid Waste and Deputy Director of Public Works, introduced themselves.

Tammy provided an overview of the agenda, including the work plan, operational updates, recycling program, and FY27 budget. She also shared the SWAG member list and their respective term dates. Tom Smith should be listed as Potomac District versus Occoquan.

Review CY2026 Work Plan

Tammy reviewed the Solid Waste Advisory Group (SWAG) Member list, their tenure, and the work plan for the year. The SWAG meets quarterly. April is the second-quarter meeting, and the focus is on the FY2027 Budget Updates.

Operational Updates – Tammy Gambita

New Hours

Landfill and Compost Facility hours changed in January. Solid Waste facilities are now open seven days a week, 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., except on Thursday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. No major complaints; however, haulers expressed a need to extend hours during "leaf season".

Landfill Updates

Landfill Capping Project Completion

The landfill completed a $5.8 million capping project covering 12 acres of Phase II, Sequence 5. Capping consists of layers of plastic lining materials, soil, and vegetation. The vegetative layer has grown well, indicating successful soil and grass establishment. The use of compost has been beneficial.

Phase Three Landfill Operations and Capping Progress

Landfilling in Phase III, Cell A, was halted in January 2026, but it is not at maximum capacity. Filling in Cell A will resume later. Cell B, built last year, was put into service in December of 2025 and will sustain operations through December 2028. The filling plan was discussed. Currently, the plan is to fill cell B to the same height as cell A, and Cell C should be built by then. There is an engineering contract out to bid, so there may be other ideas to maximize Phase 3.

Recycling Program Update – Deborah Campbell

Community Outreach and Dumpster Day Initiatives

The organization hosted 14 events in FY 2025, engaging 850 people, distributed 500 recycling magnets. The fall paper shredding event was held in November 2025 and served 306 residents. Dumpster Day events will kick off in Gainesville at Sudley Elementary School on Saturday, April 11, and will include a paper shredding event. The goal for each Dumpster Day is to collect at least 1,000 pounds of waste. Each magisterial district selects the date and location of Dumpster Days.

Compost Awareness Day will take place on Saturday, May 9, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Compost facility. It will feature facility tours, free compost samples, and educational outreach in partnership with Keep Prince William Beautiful and Environmental Management.

The spring shredding event on May 16 will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Prince William Stadium parking lot. There was a question about advertising. Media releases, PWC Alerts, HOA distribution, Solid Waste webpages, and county social media are used to promote the shred event; however, there are no paid ads. SWAG members were encouraged to share the event with their supervisor and community. Luke suggested contacting Craig Lasser, the new Construction and Operations Manager, to borrow a signboard and promote the shred at the Landfill entrance.

FY27 Budget Updates – Luke Hisghman

Division Budget Presentations Service Overview

The Solid Waste Division operates the County Landfill and the County Compost Facility. The Division promotes diversion and recycling, and collects household hazardous waste and electronics on Wednesdays and Saturdays. In FY26, we hosted a couple of "popup" events on the western side of the County. The events were extremely expensive, and the participation was low. However, Luke did get asked to reconsider the "popups" for the coming year. The Division is also responsible for litter collection in the County.

In FY25, the Solid Waste Division processed 366,000 tons and 433,000 transactions. The Compost Facility accepted more than 60,000 tons of organic material and processed more than 118,000 transactions.

The Division also manages recycling and other programs. There are 18 residential recycling trailers drop-off locations. There is an ongoing conversation about adjusting locations and increasing service at them. Cardboard stockpiles and items left outside the trailers are a challenge of the program. We also operate the Household Hazardous Waste and Electronics Recycling collection program, litter collection, and Education and Outreach.

Solid Waste Enterprise Fund

All these programs and services are funded exclusively by Solid Waste revenue (Enterprise Fund), primarily the Solid Waste Fee and tipping fees are the revenue sources. Luke explained that the revenues must cover all program costs, including operations, equipment, and future capital projects, while also maintaining reserves, planning for debt financing, and meeting state regulatory requirements for restricted funds.

Landfill Future Phase IV and Solid Waste Capital Projects

The Division is working on a master plan for the infrastructure needed to expand the landfill to the other side of the creek. The project requires a master plan from a third-party engineer to route truck wash, scales, and admin building infrastructure across the creek. The Phase IV project infrastructure should be underway before the landfill begins, Section 3c.

Landfill cell construction is a significant part of the Division's budget. Phase IV build out will be approximately 25 million cubic yards. The estimate cost is $200 million over 20 years. The estimated life of Phase IV is 25-27 years, and the remaining life of Phase III is approximately nine years.

Brad asked a question about plans for landfill life extension, expansion, diversion, and the use of technology. The department is evaluating the diversion of waste such as pallets, mattresses, and tires. Both are major landfill compaction issues.

A $250,000 budget request for mattress recycling is inadequate. Based on cost estimates of $ 2,500 per tractor-trailer load and seven trailer loads per week, the cost is closer to $ 1 million. Luke also explored working with Fairfax to take mattresses at their incinerator in exchange for landfilling Fairfax trash, but the terms proposed by Fairfax were prohibitive for PWC.

Mattress recycling is labor-intensive, costly, and a biohazard. The purchase of a shredder to handle mattresses and other problem materials is being researched. Bradley Kelly noted that shredders may be economically viable only for selective commercial loads, not for bulk mattress tonnage. He suggested reviewing a Mecklenburg County study on mattress shredding. Additionally, Robert Boyt mentioned that, based on his experience, walking-floor and dump trailers would not unload mattresses efficiently.

James (Jaime) Gestrich identified a mattress recycling facility in Troy, VA. Based on an earlier site visit by Brad, it is a small operation and not equipped for large volumes, but they are recycling wood, metal, and foam.

Deco Solutions, mattress recyclers in Maryland, was also discussed. Deborah noted that Virginia House Bill 86 establishes extended producer responsibility for mattresses, adding fees and a stewardship program, and that it should be going to Governor Spanberger for signature in April 2026.

Tire disposal management and shredding were also discussed. Shredded tires could serve as landfill cover. Lynn Meadows also suggested shredded tires might be marketable as a landscaping product. The product currently available is very expensive. Luke noted the cost of the shredding equipment ($1.5 million), maintenance, fuel, and operators is substantial. Tammy concurred with Luke and added that the Division would need to weigh what could be saved against the cost, but the payback would be several years. Robert also shared Fairfax's experience of renting a tire shredder that broke down in five minutes. The idea to use or purchase a tire shredder was subsequently abandoned. Brad also noted that a tire shedder would be a separate type of equipment from one that is shredding mattress, or other MSW. The separation of the steel from the rubber in the landscape product is a very expensive process. Currently, tires are shipped to Proko where they are shredded for a product. There is no on-site processing of tires at the landfill. Brad also noted that waste diversion technologies, etc., are his area of expertise, and he would be happy to help as needed.

A discussion on rising fuel costs and the potential to enact a fuel surcharge was suggested by Brad. Luke agreed it was an option to research and potentially take before the board.

Enterprise Fund Forecast/Solid Waste Fee Increase Proposal

The Division proposed a 12.4% increase in the solid waste fee for FY 2027, with subsequent increases every two years. Current single-family rate of $75 will increase to $84. No increase in the tipping fee is requested for FY 2027. The solid waste fee and tipping fee revenues fund landfill capital projects and equipment upgrades to support ongoing operations. Additional service request increases will require fee increases.

Based on the current financial analysis, option 3A, financing $76 million through FY2033, the structured fee growth plan includes the current 12.4% increase of the solid waste fee in FY27 and then a $5 increase every other year in the solid waste fee and the tipping fee. For example, in FY 2029, a request to increase the solid waste fee from $84 to $89 would go before the board.

The decrease in trash coming to the landfill was discussed. Tom Smith asked if it was because of the tipping fee. Luke didn't think the tipping fee was because the Prince William County tipping fee of $40 is lower than in the surrounding area. Luke attributes the decrease in trash to the deterrent effect of substantial fines for out-of-country waste.

Other Proposed Initiatives

Heavy Equipment replacement to improve operational efficiency, safety, and redundancy to improve maintenance scheduling with Fleet. Mark Bonner discussed lubrication and the benefits of automated systems. Graco was noted as a company to check into. Mark offered his experience and expertise in preventative maintenance to extend equipment life and save money, as needed.

Expansion of waste diversion and recycling were covered earlier in the meeting as ways to support sustainability and extend the landfill's useful life. Several security enhancements, such as cameras, are being discussed with DoIT. Security guard on site when it is closed, and County police on site during HHW days, and Park Ranger patrolling.

Compost Facility contract (Convertus) has requested contract increases because they are not making enough money. Although the request was denied, conversations are ongoing.

General Questions and Comments

As the representative for the Potomac District, Tom noted, Powells Creek runs into Lake Montclair, and he requested a briefing/report on groundwater and surface water. Tammy will add a briefing to the next SWAG agenda.

Opal began converting landfill gas to RNG about two years ago, and the RNG is delivered via a virtual pipeline (trucking). Still investigating the cost of pipeline construction. Revenue royalty from the RNG is currently tied up in County taxes and the general fund. Tammy will also provide a briefing on air emissions reduction through RNG conversion versus landfill gas-to-electricity, marking a significant environmental win.

Tom noted the use of robotics and automation in waste handling. Luke also noted that Opal placed automated monitors on 100 wells to adjust virtually. A question was asked about the potential for solar panels on the closed portion of the landfill. Solar panels, cell settling, etc.; prior solar panel contract for Phase 1 was not cost-effective due to an interconnect expense. However, Tom suggested an RFP because there is now the advantage of a 9-megawatt interconnect owned by Opal, which might make a solar panel project in Phase 1 more attractive and feasible in the future.

Deborah noted that landfill tours will resume in April for George Mason environment science students.

Lynn inquired about recycling for prescription medicine bottles and clarity on the numbers on plastics that should be recycled. The County does not list polypropylene pill bottles (5) for recycling. However, Deborah noted that the Lions Club accepts them for reuse. Generally, the County recycles plastic bottles, jugs, and jars, which typically have the #1 (PET) or #2 (HDPE) on them.

Adjournment and Next Meeting

The meeting was adjourned around 8:35 p.m.

Next meeting, July 9, 2026