

Vernon County Solid Waste and Recycling Committee Meeting

July 15th, 2020

SCS Engineers Post Presentation Question and Answer Transcript

Those in attendance included:

Betsy Powers- SCS Engineers
Vita Quinn- SCS Engineers
Christine Miller- SCS Engineers
Sherren Clark- SCS Engineers
Stacie Sanborn- Vernon County Solid Waste and Recycling Administrator
Kelli Mitchell- Solid Waste and Recycling Committee Chair
Shawn Redington- Solid Waste and Recycling Committee Vice Chair
Lorn Goede- Solid Waste and Recycling Committee Secretary
Mary Rae- Solid Waste and Recycling Committee
David Strudthoff- Solid Waste and Recycling Committee
Justin Running- Vernon County Board Chair
Ole Yttri- Vernon County Board Supervisor
Dave Eggen- Vernon County Board Supervisor
Phil Hewitt- Town of Viroqua Chair
Lonnie Mueller-Episcopo
Amy Martin
Amy Arnold
Anna Jo Doerr
Mary Ellen Madison Doerr
Ray Danielson
Bill Meeks- Southwest Sanitation

Question and Answer began with Amy Arnold.

Amy Arnold: *My first question is, I guess one thing I noticed and I'm wishing Kelvin Rodolfo was here with us today talking about, to speak to the geological piece. Because I think from his analysis of the information that there was some mistakes made in that process that SCS isn't speaking too. I guess I have nothing else to say in this moment but maybe I'll like wave my hand like this if I think of something.*

Stacie Sanborn- *Okay. Alright, moving on to Anna Jo Doerr.*

Anna Jo Doerr – *Hello, I'm gonna kinda go through my notes here and one question I had about Brian Kent. Brian Kent I know he is your present engineer and I know you used him as a source for information and I guess I have a little bit of a question about that being a loop that is independent because he is presently the engineer of the landfill and to source him and then quote him, and then say, because I know he is in favor of it, of the work he's done. I'm just questioning if there was a perspective beyond Brian Kent that you researched in term of an engineer as a viable story of how this is all working.*

That's one question. Do you want me to list them, say all of my questions, and then you answer, or do you want to do them one at a time?

Stacie Sanborn- *How about we do them one at a time Anna.*

Anna Jo Doerr- *Ok, start there.*

Christine Miller (SCS Engineers)– *So Anna, this is Christine, I can talk to that. Doing the design and permitting process of landfills, we do that across the nation, and in particular Betsy and Sherren are doing it in Wisconsin. I spoke with Brian, and then, just to get a gut check to see was that in line with what we are seeing in other landfills, I did talk to Betsy on that and until you actually get into the hard design these are all estimates on numbers. As I understand exactly what you're saying, they are estimates on numbers, to do the gut check, to say that is it reasonable to use these numbers within the scope. True, I do think that its solid. From our aspect you will be subbing things like hiring Brian Kent. We are professional engineers we have a job to do, we have a reputation and a license to uphold in doing that. I do think that the numbers that are in it, that Brian provided, with the understanding that going forward they are solid. The feasibility and permitting it's the state process that guides what needs to be done.*

Betsy do you have anything to add?

Betsy Powers (SCS Engineers)- *That's right Christine, we did take the numbers that Brian gave us and we used them and compared them to some other projects that we've done in Wisconsin for landfills for the permitting and construction to kind of get an idea if we felt like they needed to be raised or lowered, ultimately, we felt like in general they were good. We thought some were a little bit high we used them as is because we did not have enough info on what that full expansion would look like at this point so we thought it was better to stay on that conservative side of it.*

Anna Jo Doerr – *Okay, thank you. Was anyone else gonna say anything else to that? My next question is when you put the third option on the picture, which is the closure option and basically concluded at the end of it that it's not financially viable. I just don't think that is a very full, why aren't you considering for example the benefit, the risk benefit, the risk management benefit that is a result of closure because there is no more landfill in this particular locale with the particular ground water and Karst geology phenomena that we have. So when you consider it financially viable your not accounting for the picture of it not existing as an open landfill anymore, your only accounting for a particular picture of is it making or not making money anymore and I just think that aspect of the presentation wrongly presents the value of closure.*

Christine Miller (SCS Engineers)- *To clarify, are you saying that we had that it was not financially sustainable to close the landfill?*

Anna Jo Doerr – *That is what I understood from that chart.*

Christine Miller (SCS Engineers)- *That is not correct. Just going through just the financial aspect, and we were looking only at the financial aspects, and there are a lot of other aspects that come into play when you're considering to continue and expand your landfill or closing the landfill. What we were looking at was specifically the financial aspects of it. That discussion beyond that, is part of another discussion, it could be in conjunction, but that wasn't part of what we were looking at with this; and in that it did show that the three options that would potentially would end with a positive fund balance, option three of closing the landfill was one of those three options. So we were not saying it was not feasible to close the landfill.*

Anna Jo Doerr-Perhaps I misunderstood that, perhaps a I need to look back at that slide. I thought there was a conclusion about option three that said that that was the least desirable, least recommended option from a consultant stand point.

Christine Miller (SCS Engineers)-The landfill having a negative balance would be the least, actually really when you look at the transfer station, the numbers that are there would be the least beneficial, and then expanding the landfill not having a positive balance not being sustainable financially is not a good way to go.

Anna Jo Doerr – At the end of your presentation when you were talking about public health and public welfare and indicators like that, I'm just wondering, if something, I know its small stuff but there was an over flow spill in 2018, if something like that does not even register on that data when you say the public health and the public welfare and those indicators are all fine? But there was an overflow, I know it was mitigated by the engineers, but does that just not even register as like a breach in those kind of things? Or are you aware of the over flow that happened in one of the flood incidences that happened in the flood last year?

Sherran Clark (SCS Engineers)- No, I actually wasn't aware of that. But what we are looking at is the monitor data at the monitoring wells. So, it would say that, if there was an impact we didn't see it in the monitoring well data. But that doesn't mean it happened or didn't happen. It was a shallow impact.

Anna Jo Doerr- It didn't register on any of the data you reviewed, is what you're saying?

Sherran Clark (SCS Engineers)- Right.

Inaudible...

Anna Jo Doerr- What about existence of fire inside the landfill? Is that registered on any of the data you reviewed? The possible presence of fire and or the presence (**Inaudible input from SCS Engineers**) or the presence of fire burning in the landfill and possible compromises to the landfill.

Sherran Clark (SCS Engineers)- No we didn't review any data of fire.

Anna Jo Doerr- Okay. One of my last questions I think I want to ask is the piece of whether or not, since Southwest Sanitation is the biggest customer, but they did not declare that they would or wouldn't continue to be our customer in the future. That seems like a huge factor that didn't get investigated very deeply or reveled very deeply. I just heard it get spoken about. In which case that would be a huge financial impact if they were not our customer.

Betsy Powers– We agree. We think that needs to be explored by the county and the committee as they look forward to what makes that most sense for them to proceed.

Anna Jo Doerr- I think that's all my points, and I'm sure other people have things they want to say. If I look at my notes and come up with more questions I'll raise my hand Stacie.

Stacie Sanborn (SWR Administrator)- So Episcopo, I think that's Lonnie, do you have any questions?

Hearing nothing from the Episcopo. Amy Martin do you have any questions?

Amy Martin- *No questions.*

Stacie Sanborn (SWR Administrator)- *Bill Meeks do you have any questions?*

Bill Meeks (Southwest Sanitation)- *I do on the financial portion of the study. What waste volume did you use in your assumptions for each scenario?*

Christine Miller (SCS Engineers)- *We are using the volume that was noted in 2019 as the baseline.*

Bill Meeks (Southwest Sanitation)- *Current volumes, assuming that the current volumes would continue.*

Christine Miller (SCS Engineers)- *Correct, and we noted that.*

Bill Meeks (Southwest Sanitation)- *Ok.*

Stacie Sanborn (SWR Administrator)-*Any other questions Bill?*

Bill Meeks (Southwest Sanitation)- *I assumed your dollar figures were for expected future expansion costs, obviously an expansion is gonna cost more than current landfill, your fixed costs for cubic yard of air space. Did you factor that in your analysis?*

Christine Miller (SCS Engineers)-*The cost to do the expansion?*

Bill Meeks (Southwest Sanitation)- *An estimated, a projection regarding the per cubic yard cost to do the expansion portion which is gonna be in 2025 dollars.*

Christine Miller (SCS Engineers)- *Correct. We have the cost, but at this point without having the design done we have the cost and then those dollars move forward.*

Bill Meeks (Southwest Sanitation)- *Future dollars or current dollars?*

Christine Miller (SCS Engineers)- *Well, we took current dollars and projected them to future dollars.*

Bill Meeks (Southwest Sanitation)- *Okay.*

Stacie Sanborn (SWR Administrator)- *Any other questions Bill?*

Bill Meeks (Southwest Sanitation)- *I don't have anything else.*

Stacie Sanborn (SWR Administrator)- *Brandon Larson?*

Dave Eggen (Town of Christiana Chairman) - *Its actually Dave Eggen, I'm borrowing Brandon's phone.*

Stacie Sanborn (SWR Administrator)- *Dave do you have any questions?*

Dave Eggen (Town of Christiana Chairman) - *I'm just supportive of expansion and the science here makes a lot of sense. I am representing the Town of Christiana which is around the City of Westby, as well as the District 10 on the County Board. This this is a very good presentation and I'll leave you.*

Stacie Sanborn (SWR Administrator)- *Anything from call in User #5, they just unmuted. Ray Danielson?*

Ray Danielson- *No questions here.*

Stacie Sanborn (SWR Administrator)- *Call in User #7? I don't know who that is. Would that be Tom Lukens? Are you on this meeting Tom? I'm not hearing anything from seven.*

Stacie Sanborn (SWR Administrator)- *Justin do you have any comments or Questions?*

Justin Running (County Board Chair) - *I don't at this time.*

Stacie Sanborn (SWR Administrator)- *Ole Yttri, any questions for you?*

Ole Yttri (County Board Supervisor)- *I have none at this time.*

Stacie Sanborn (SWR Administrator)- *Phil Hewitt any questions?*

Phil Hewitt (Town of Viroqua Chair)- *Not at this time.*

Stacie Sanborn (SWR Administrator)- *Now I'm gonna move to Committee Members. Mary Rae do you have any questions for SCS.*

Mary Rae (SWR Committee)- *I don't.*

Stacie Sanborn (SWR Administrator)- *Shawn?*

Shawn Redington (SWR Committee Vice Chair)- *Not at this time and not for SCS. I do have questions for the Committee to discuss.*

Stacie Sanborn (SWR Administrator)- *David?*

David Strudthoff (SWR Committee)- *I have two questions. Currently right now at Bergen township, the volume has doubled because of the coronavirus. What impact theoretically would that have if this virus continues for another year or so, the volume literally doubling, what does that do to your projections and would some modifications both financially and also with what to do with the landfill would that be impacted if this volume continues over the next year or so?*

Christine Miller (SCS Engineers)-*When you look at the model it's a model and it's something that will need to be updated as time progresses as Betsy mentioned. I believe it is something that once you have the feasibility study done and have more information or know more or if the cells get constructed in different years then assumed in the model, all of that effects the model. It's something to keep track of as you go on, so you stay on top of where you are at and what is going on. So in terms of the additional tonnage with coronavirus, if you have more waste coming in, then your hopefully continuing to maintain and utilize that airspace effectively but it can shorten the lifespan that you have on your landfill. Just continuing to watch what you have. The costs are gonna be similar if your constructing, it will just be sooner that you were constructing that airspace which means that getting that feasibility and permitting done is even more critical to get done as soon as you can if that is the route you choose to go.*

David Strudthoff (SWR Committee)- *Does that mean if we are bringing in more volume, does that mean it is more profitable for instance this fiscal year. That's my question. Are we making more money because of that?*

Christine Miller (SCS Engineers)- *Yes, if you have more volume coming in you are making more money.*

David Strudthoff (SWR Committee)- *My second question has to do, if we close this all together and just walk away from this service, what happens, is it my assumption that all this responsibility falls on the backs of the townships then. They are now the ones that have to figure out what to do with hauling stuff away, they are the ones that have to setting up for the independent contractors. I'm not sure of the fallout. When Vernon County walks away from this all together, what responsibilities do the townships have if any.*

Betsy Powers (SCS Engineers)- *They will have to determine whether they are gonna go for public contract for all their residents under one contract or let residents figure it out on their own. So it does put more burden on the townships to figure that out. In terms of recycling, Vernon County will be, presumably still be the Responsible Unit and have some responsibility there, more just coordination or working with municipalities to pass down some of the money to help them figure out how they are gonna manage recyclables in an alternative manner.*

Amy Arnold- *My understanding of municipalities is that currently municipalities hire with a hauling contractor anyway, otherwise the garbage would just sit in your town hall, you already have that figured out so it's the hauler that figures out where it goes.*

Stacie Sanborn (SWR Administrator)- *I'd like to speak to that, If the closure option would also cease our recycling operations. The county provides the recycling services to all of the townships except for two at zero cost. Once that goes away I would assume they would have to contract that service through the haulers and I don't know that that would be a free option at that point.*

Amy Arnold- *Okay, Let's forget what Stacie just said for a second and go back to what I said. Is that correct? Maybe Bill can speak to that since he is a hauler.*

Bill Meeks (Southwest Sanitation)- *I can speak for that. Nothing would change for the townships as far as hauling waste. Your relationship is with your hauler and we have disposal options other than the county disposal option. As far as recycling we would be able to handle that for you. The county receives grant money from the state to administer the recycling program. My assumption would be that that would filter down to the townships if the county were to get out of the recycling business.*

David Strudthoff (SWR Committee)- *Is it fair to say all we are doing is just decentralizing it and putting the responsibility on the backs of the Townships. Is that really the bottom line, in favor of closing it?*

Bill Meeks (Southwest Sanitation)- *I don't think the responsibility is currently with the townships and again your relationships is with the hauler. Your hauler is making the decision as to where they haul it. I don't think anything would actually change for the townships.*

Kelli Mitchell (SWR Committee Chair)- *Do we have any other questions for Betsy, Vita, Christine, or Sherren; SCS Engineers?*

Amy Arnold- *Another question I had is, I think the point that was brought up about the projections being in current dollars versus future dollars, which future dollars my understanding, would change dramatically the amount we would need to get for the tipping fees. Is that correct?*

Christine Miller (SCS Engineers)- *Since the projections were done in current dollars and escalated to future dollars. So if it was 2020 to 2027 the fees where escalated to 2027 dollars.*

Bill Meeks (Southwest Sanitation)- *What mechanism did you use to escalate those dollars, just inflation or did you factor in the cost of future expansion?*

Amy Arnold- *Because if you didn't factor in the cost of the future expansion then this is not a good projection it is?*

Betsy Powers (SCS Engineers)- *We have the cost of inflation accounted for and the cost to perform the permitting included in the model as well as cost to construct the new cells included in the model. So those dollars, what it takes to permit and construct the expansion are included in the model as well.*

Kelli Mitchel (SWR Committee Chair)- *Any other questions for the engineers.*

Dave Eggen (Town of Christiana Chairman)- *Getting back to the townships, this would have a huge impact on townships that haul their own garbage to the county landfill which is what we do. Also, the City of Westby is buying a new garbage truck their going to increase their garbage flow to the landfill. So, there would be to large impacts right there. Thank you.*

Anna Jo Doerr- *So this is a question to people with experience in other landfills around the country. When I hear data about us having variable flow velocities I consider that to be a dangerous element of our particular landfill. Our landfill you were highlighting that the DNR requirement is only 10 feet separation from the ground water and we exceed that in ours. I heard a profile of our landfill is like exceeding the regulations that currently exist in both of these points however, those points I don't feel comfortable with those points even still, and I wonder, I'm asking if those of you with experience in other landfills in other places can tell me that other landfills exist with even better, I'm hearing a profile of this landfill as exceeding regulations but I'd like to know about engineers who have dealt with landfill that have even more improved statistics regarding these aspects of design.*

Sherren Clark (SCS Engineers)- *In terms of liner system other landfills in the state or country generally have less liner system then you do because most sites in Wisconsin have four feet of clay and a geo membrane and the U.S. requirement is less than that. There are locations with double liner systems but they are not very common. There are states where that is done. In terms of the geologic environment, we have worked on other sights in Wisconsin that have somewhat similar environments, with the fractured bedrock and some soil over the top of it. The geologic investigations have really been focused on making sure it is a stable base and making sure you can monitor that facility. Sometimes the DNR has asked for additional work at the feasibility stage in terms of the geologic investigation and more extensive monitoring systems. We did have one site, several years ago that was turned down, because the geology based on the feasibility investigation, the DNR was not satisfied that it was a monitorable site, so it didn't get built. So that process is still out there to look at if you're looking at an expansion. What the geology is and any further evaluation.*

Kelli Mitchel (SWR Committee Chair)- *Did anyone else have any other questions for SCS Engineers.*

Amy Arnold- *In the presentation Kelvin Rodolfo gave us at the landfill about his analysis of, I think it was the DNR well testing when they were figuring out whether they could even site the landfill there in the first place. There was a mistake made on how they were testing, I'm sorry I'm not a geologist I can't speak super clearly and I'm really sad he's not here, but on how they were testing, it didn't account for the time it took the monitoring equipment to get down into the bottom of the well. So what it looks like a certain flow, is actually a really dangerous level, and his analysis is that the landfill never shouldn't have been sited there in the first place. So the fact that it was, the fact that these dear engineers who did this analysis didn't pick up on this, I think just shows that we can find data to support whatever we, you know depending on how we look at the data can support whatever we want. I still believe we should not be expanding this landfill for a multitude of reasons.*

Kelli Mitchel (SWR Committee Chair)- *Does Anyone have any more questions for the engineers? Any committee members have anything more for the engineers? Then I'd like to thank SCS for coming today and giving their presentation. We will not be having any action on this item today.*

Transcribed by Stacie Sanborn and Lisa Cornwell.