



**Tuesday, March 21, 2017 @ 7:30 PM**

1. President Dale Rumberger called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM.
  
2. Administrative Matters & Officers reports
  - February Minutes - A **Motion** to approve the February minutes was made, seconded, and approved unanimously by voice vote.
  - Treasurer's Report was provided by Larry Clark, who stated that there has been no change in the past month.
  
3. Supervisors' Reports.
  - **Springfield District Supervisor Pat Herrity** was not present.
  - **Mount Vernon District Supervisor Dan Storck** commented on several issues, the most important of which was the Follow-up status of the February fire at Covanta. In his opening remarks, the Supervisor stated that, "Pursuant to last week's meeting with Covanta and DPW, we have assembled people here to answer the many questions that have come up. The leadership of Covanta met with me and assured me that he is interested in addressing the long-term issues as well as short-term. Our fire officials have done truly yeomen's work in this case, and we are trying to improve our reaction, should this happen again. We have had a 25-year relationship with Covanta, and still have another 15 years under lease".

In attendance this evening were more than 20 key personnel (a list may be found at Attachment 1), each with significant roles related to the fire event and/or the follow-up. Several of these men briefed the SCF attendees on their particular roles and they stayed afterward until all submitted questions were answered.

Supervisor Storck then turned the floor over to James Patteson, Director, Department of Public Works and Environmental Services at Fairfax County, who stated, "We want to revisit the whole event to ensure it doesn't happen again." Numerous introductions were made, followed by briefings from specific subject matter experts, including Fairfax County Fire & Rescue, Fairfax County Health Department, Fairfax County Public Works, and the Covanta Management team.



Historical Background - Beginning with the history of partnership between Covanta and Fairfax County, it was emphasized that:

- Since 1990, the Covanta Fairfax Energy-from-waste facility has provided reliable sustainable waste management service to the County and residents
- The Covanta Facility is a key piece to the excellent, award-winning integrated waste management system of Fairfax County
- Strong environmental performance-emissions are continuously monitored and stack tested annually

Partnership Evolution :

- The contract is renegotiated every 5 years
- Covanta is responsible for everything inside the fence
- The County is responsible for everything outside the fence
- The County has agreements with several other waste facilities

Fire Response Overview - the Operations Chief reported that his initial focus was on “Life-Safety”. In other words, he called for additional resources which would enable him to not risk human lives in order to put out a trash fire. More than one person mentioned how remarkable it was not to have lost any lives there. By Feb 5, the fire was deemed Under Control; but for over 2 weeks, there were spot fires. Finally, the fire was out on Feb 14.

Fire Investigative Process - Regarding this process, Lt Tim Palmer (Fire & Rescue Investigator) said that he interviewed many people, and started by trying to find the cause. There was a lot of false information in the beginning, but the Covanta employees were able to provide very helpful insights. Lt Palmer determined that all Covanta employees did exactly what they had been trained to do; but by the time the fire was noticed, they needed to call 911. The Fire is thought to have started from an exo-thermic source in a trash pile, a few minutes after the last dump truck (from North Carolina!).

Fire Water Flow Management - Eric Forbes, the Complex Manager at the I-95 landfill, described Fire Water Flow Management during the fire. Water used to fight the fire flowed down in two directions. One method used in order to control the flow was the application of “clean dirt.” Also, some of the run-off water was pumped out of the County Stormwater Pond. At present, they are aerating the ponds and treating them to decrease bacterial count.



Ambient Air Monitoring Results - Brian Bahor, Covanta's Vice President for Environmental, Sustainability and Permitting, explained:

- Covanta mobilized an independent 3<sup>rd</sup> party, Trinity Consultants, as soon as possible to monitor ambient air. Available monitors were quickly identified on Friday and either were obtained by Trinity that afternoon (DustTrak models) or shipped via overnight delivery (E\_BAM)
- Servicing of the monitors during the monitoring period was done by Trinity personnel; and they also downloaded and compiled all results.
- Locations were selected to achieve representative results based on existing and forecast wind directions, and to ensure a safe and secure site with multi-day availability.
- Observations resulting from the Monitoring Stations indicated no significant impact on Air quality.

Particulate Matter - Chris Alton (an independent consultant to the Health Department) discussed particulate matter which had dropped during and after the fire. He stated that there was almost no effect to the north and south of the fire, because eastward winds carried particulate matter more in that direction. Mr. Alton then spent some time comparing the findings from the Covanta fire with guidelines in the USEPA Air Quality Index. Based on this standard, our fire created an "Unhealthy-for-Sensitive-Groups" air quality in the early hours. This condition persisted for about 3 days, and so asthmatics might have been uncomfortable; but this level of exposure should not lead to any long-term health impact. By Feb 5 our air quality had returned to "Good".

Smoke - Dr. Wilder, from the Health Department, addressed the smoke issue, including:

- Smoke Composition is a complex mixture of gases and solid particles. Particulate matter (as discussed above) is the most likely exposure from smoke, and these may be fine particles or more coarse. Short term effects include irritation of the eyes, nose, or throat; cough, shortness of breath, chest pain, and/or headaches.
- Health Monitoring associated with the fire included symptom surveillance, which was conducted during and after the event. There has been no increase in Emergency Room and urgent care visits, no increase in the rates of respiratory illness symptoms, and no EMS calls related to respiratory illness symptoms. Therefore, long term effects are unlikely.



- Precautions for smoke exposure were reviewed, such as limiting outdoor activities, keeping indoor air as clean as possible, avoiding activities that increase air pollution, following the advice of your doctor if you have a chronic illness, and contacting your doctor if you develop symptoms.

Covanta's Recovery Plan - Jay Lear, Covanta's VP for Operations, stated that:

- Primary plant systems are intact, with damage contained to the cranes in the waste storage pit and roof.
- A Facility Recovery Team as well as a Recovery Project Manager have been established to support the local facility management
- Main focus is on inspection and re-establishment of the roof and siding structural integrity.
- The Fire Protection System Recovery Plan is being improved, including upgrading the fire suppression system to meet or exceed current fire codes. Also Covanta has hired an expert in Fire Systems Prevention and Suppression
- Additional Protection and Mitigation Measures include:
  - Establishing a buffer zone and a new sop to keep separation of waste on the tipping floor away from the refuse storage pit
  - Evaluation of other additional measures including: infrared sensors, installation of a "fire rover" system or something similar for both the tipping floor and the refuse pit; and new water cannons with remote control capability.

Upgrades and Long-term Investment - Joey Neuhoff, Covanta VP and General Manager, addressed upgrades and long term investment, since the plant is "down" for a long term anyway.

- Plans to invest over \$30 million at Covanta
- Reiterated his commitment for the planned improvements already stated in the Covanta Recovery Plan (above).
- Wants a Community Engagement Restart, including:
  - Providing routine updates to County Staff (i.e. DPW, F&R, and Building Services)



- Providing outreach and updates to elected officials
- Providing Progress Updates to the general public
- Commitment to provide continuous emissions monitoring data
- E-mail established for neighbors to send questions and complaints–  
[covantaFairfax@covanta.com](mailto:covantaFairfax@covanta.com)

### Questions & Answers

- Several questions focused on emergency alerts and the timeliness of school notifications. Examples include:
  - “I just googled FFX County EAN. There are lots of alerts but no EAN. Exactly what are we talking about?”
  - “An EIS was required and approved in order to build Covanta. Was such a disaster as has occurred here and elsewhere raised during the EIS and provided with plans to prevent?”
  - “Why are we hearing about all of this now after the fact? Wouldn’t it have been more prudent to side with caution to keep people indoors?”

COMMENT: Supervisor Storck feels that one big mistake was not to activate the Emergency Alert Network (EAN), and that we should create a panel of all the stake holders to discuss multiple platforms for improving our notification options.

- Many questions re-visited information regarding the air quality, such as:
  - “What justifies a County official to state that there is “nothing to worry about” within the first 12 hours with no monitoring information and to state this to the communities of where there are people that should avoid this Particulate Matter?”
  - “Was independent air quality testing done (not by Covanta)? Why didn’t we get an air quality warning in the days after the fire? Why was there no email call or public warning?”
  - “On Feb 3-4, were schools notified to keep students inside?”
  - Should the County Health Department have notified all homeowners that live 1/4 mile east of the fire? The smoke was blowing over my house.”



- “I continue to occasionally detect a strong putrid odor in my community of Spring Hill Senior Campus on Laurel Crest. Why? How long will this continue?”

- One person questioned the preventive maintenance at Covanta: “You know you have a 27-year-old system. Why does it take this major incident to look at the new state-of-the-art systems? Shouldn’t you be looking at (plant systems) on a periodic basis? Shouldn’t the County review your efforts (non efforts?) to keep plant up to current standards?”

ANSWER: Covanta officials detailed their proactive maintenance and replacement / upgrades at the plant.

- “What was DEQ’s role in this?”

ANSWER: Tom Petty (DEQ) said that his dept has no specific response role.

## 5. Committee Reports

- **Transportation**, Dale Johnson, Chair, is out of town now, and sends word he soon should have a road report on Lorton.
- **Public Safety**, Jonathan Kiell, Chair - Unable to attend because he is conducting CERT training.
- **Land Use**, Nick Firth, Chair, placed the following **Resolution** on the table for vote regarding a request for Sidewalk & Trail Waiver # 9754-WTL-005-1 at 10712 Richmond Highway. It was approved by voting members of the SCF without opposition.

**Whereas**, LDS, Site and Technical Services, have requested a waiver of Section 17-201(2) of the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance and Sections 8-0101.1 and 8-0201.3 of the Public Facilities Manual for a Sidewalk and Trail.

**Whereas**, the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, Lower Potomac Planning District states:

‘Establish a Clear Corridor Image - Develop two well-defined vehicular entry point "gateways" to the Corridor at the Occoquan River and the Capital Beltway to establish a strong overall image and help define the Corridor .



Improve Access and Functional Amenities - Visually improve pedestrian and vehicular traffic systems to enhance intersections, reduce curb cuts, and provide better signage and access to commercial facilities and adjacent, non-commercial uses.'

**Whereas**, Route 1 is expected to be widened and improved between Fort Belvoir and the Occoquan River in the near future

**Whereas**, this is a Gateway Entrance into Fairfax County

**Now, therefore, be it Resolved**, The South County Federation opposes the Sidewalk & Trail Waiver for this site.

6. Old Business – None

7. New Business – Dale R said he is trying to get an update on Liberty. In May we should have legislators here at the SCF meeting.

A **Motion** was made, seconded, and approved to adjourn. Dale R adjourned the meeting at 9:55 PM.

NEXT MEETING: April 11, 2017 at 7:30 in the South County High School Media Room .

Future Meetings: April 11, May 9, June 13, July 11, September 12, October 10, November 14, December 12

Attachment 1 – SCF Sign-in 21 Mar 2017