

Jim Oddie, **President**
ACWMA

Peter Maass, **2nd Vice President**
ACWMA

Jillian Buckholz, Recycling Programs

Bernie Camara, Recycling Materials Processing Industry

Nancy Deming, Environmental Educator

Sara Lamnin, ACWMA

Dianne Martinez, ACWMA

John Moore, Environmental Organization

Tim Rood, ACWMA

Matthew Southworth (Interim), Source Reduction Specialist

Vacant, Solid Waste Industry Representative

Wendy Sommer, Executive Director

AGENDA

**MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE
AND
ALAMEDA COUNTY RECYCLING BOARD**

Thursday, August 9, 2018

4:00 P.M.

**StopWaste Offices
1537 Webster Street
Oakland, CA 94612
510-891-6500**

Meeting is wheelchair accessible. Sign language interpreter may be available upon five (5) days' notice to 510-891-6500.

- I. CALL TO ORDER**
- II. ROLL CALL**
- III. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE PRESIDENT**
- Page IV. CONSENT CALENDAR**
 - 1 1. Approval of the Draft Minutes of July 12, 2018 (Tom Padia)**
 - 7 2. Board Attendance Record (Tom Padia)**
 - 9 3. Written Report of Ex Parte Communications (Tom Padia)**
- V. OPEN PUBLIC DISCUSSION**

An opportunity is provided for any member of the public wishing to speak on any matter within the jurisdiction of the Board, but not listed on the agenda. Each speaker is limited to three minutes.
- VI. REGULAR CALENDAR**
 - 11 1. DR3 Mattress Recycling – Facility Relocation Support (Meri Soll)**

Provide a \$57,500 one-time grant to The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (nonprofit entity operating as DR3) to offset facility relocation costs from Oakland to Livermore.

- 13 2. Municipal Panel: Member Agency Schools Programs (Meghan Starkey)**
 This item is for information only.

VII. OTHER PUBLIC INPUT

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS/MEMBER COMMENTS

IX. ADJOURNMENT

DRAFT

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE
AND
ALAMEDA COUNTY RECYCLING BOARD**

Thursday, July 12, 2018

7:00 P.M.

**Fremont Family Resource Center
39155 Liberty Street
Millennium, Ste. A120
Fremont, CA 94538
510-574-2000
(Directions attached)**

**Teleconference
Jillian Buckholz
2807 Harrison Street #1
Oakland CA 94611
530-228-4520**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Jim Oddie, President, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Jillian Buckholz, Recycling Programs (teleconference)
Bernie Camara, Recycling Materials Processing Industry
Nancy Deming, Environmental Educator
Sara Lamnin, ACWMA
Peter Maass, ACWMA
Dianne Martinez, ACWMA
John Moore, Environmental Organization
Jim Oddie, ACWMA
Tim Rood, ACWMA
Matthew Southworth (Interim), Source Reduction Specialist

Absent:

Vacant, Solid Waste Industry Representative

Staff Present:

Tom Padia, Deputy Executive Director
Wendy Sommer, Executive Director
Justin Lehrer, Senior Management Analyst
Farand Kan, County Counsel
Arliss Dunn, Clerk of the Board

Others Participating:

Chris Valbusa, General Manager, Alameda County Industries (ACI)
Alexandra Saffold, Intern, City of Hayward

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE PRESIDENT

President Oddie welcomed Nancy Deming to the Recycling Board. Board member Deming will be serving in the capacity of Environmental Educator. Board member Deming provided an overview of her background and experience. President Oddie recognized Matthew Southworth. Mr. Southworth will be serving as an interim appointment (Source Reduction Specialist) for Board member Sarah Vared who is on leave through the month of September.

Wendy Sommer shared an email that she received from former Board member Adan Alonzo to provide an update on the status of his health. The email presents a positive road ahead for Mr. Alonzo and he expressed his appreciation for the support received from Board members and staff.

IV. CONSENT CALENDAR

1. **Approval of the Draft Minutes of June 14, 2018 (Tom Padia)**
2. **Board Attendance Record (Tom Padia)**
3. **Written Report of Ex Parte Communications (Tom Padia)**
4. **Grants Issued Under Executive Director Signature Authority (Wendy Sommer)**

There were no public comments on the Consent Calendar. Board member Maass made the motion to approve the Consent Calendar. Board member Martinez seconded and the motion carried 9-0. The Clerk called the roll:

(Ayes: Buckholz, Camara, Deming, Lamnin, Maass, Moore, Martinez, Oddie, Southworth. Nays: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Rood. Vacant: Solid Waste Industry Representative).

IV. OPEN PUBLIC DISCUSSION

There was none.

VI. REGULAR CALENDAR

1. **Amendment to the Alameda County Integrated Waste Management Plan (ColWMP) for Alameda County Industries (ACI) Transfer/Processing Expansion for facility located at 610 Aladdin Avenue in San Leandro (Anu Natarajan)**

Staff recommends that the Recycling Board acting as the Local Task Force review and comment on the proposed ColWMP amendment, and that the Planning Committee

- Recommend approval of the amendment to the Waste Management Authority
- Recommend that the Waste Management Authority adopt findings that the proposed project conforms with the amended ColWMP.

Anu Natarajan provided a summary of the staff report. A link to the report is available here:

[ACI-ColWMP-Amendment-07-12-18](#). Ms. Natarajan noted that the applicant revised the application resulting in a change to the report on page 12, paragraph 2. The first bullet is revised to state: *Increasing the overall permitted tonnage for the facility from 412 tons per day (tpd) to 620 tpd, ~~along with temporary exceedances of up to 10 percent for a maximum of 20 days per year (62 tpd for up to 20 days) (i.e. deleting the temporary exceedances)~~*.

Board member Moore stated that in the future it would be helpful to include a copy of the CEQA determination along with the staff report. Board member Moore stated that if the request for the increase in tonnages is to bring in more recyclables and organics then why not limit the tonnages to those types of materials. Mr. Valbusa stated that they've experienced growth in the overall volume of tonnages but primarily in recyclables and organics. However, they are also a solid waste facility and

handle bulky items and C&D debris as well. Board member Moore inquired about how they manage MSW. Mr. Valbusa stated that MSW is transferred directly to landfill. Board member Moore stated that if the goal is to promote diversion why wouldn't we limit the increased tonnages to recyclable materials and cap MSW. Mr. Valbusa replied that ACI has a solid waste facility permit required by the state and they are required to handle the material but not exceed the cap. By limiting the cap to recycling and organics, it would potentially impact the diversion operations of the solid waste materials. Mr. Padia commented that China National Sword and the increased focus on organics contamination have impacted current markets and caused materials previously diverted to be considered potentially unmarketable, so there must be some flexibility for processors. Mr. Moore inquired if ACI had made any operational modifications in response to the impacts of China Sword. Mr. Valbusa stated that they have increased staffing in the MRF on the sort line to pull out contamination, slowed down the sorting belt, and adding substantial capital improvements this year by introducing new equipment to improve the efficiency for sorting, etc. Board member Maass inquired if there will be an increase in truck traffic. Mr. Valbusa stated that they are currently permitted for 193 trucks and they average approximately 100. Board member Maass commented that the City of San Leandro has approved the project. Board member Martinez added the City of San Leandro would have forwarded any public comments if they had received such comments. Ms. Natarajan commented that staff did not receive any comments from San Leandro and the item will be heard in two additional meetings prior to adoption. Board member Moore stated that he doesn't understand what will be different than what is currently happening with respect to diversion and would like to hear more about that.

There was no public comment on this item. Board member Martinez made the motion to approve the staff recommendation. Board member Rood seconded and the motion carried 8-1. The Clerk called the roll:

(Ayes: Buckholz, Deming, Lamnin, Maass, Martinez, Oddie, Rood, Southworth. Nays: Moore. Abstain: None. Absent: None. Recused: Camara. Vacant: Solid Waste Industry Representative).

2. Five Year CoIWMP Review (Anu Natarajan)

Staff recommends that the Recycling Board, in its role as the Local Task Force, review the proposed 5-year review report, and provide comments (if any).

Ms. Natarajan provided an overview of the staff report. A link to the report is available here: [Five-Year-CoIWMP-Review-07-12-18](#)

There was no public comment on this item. Board member Maass stated that he was pleased to hear that the turmoil in the markets were considered but did not have a significant impact on the report. Ms. Natarajan stated that staff will be updating the CoIWMP to coincide with the agency priority setting and will provide a more comprehensive update to the Board of both the content and the format of the document.

3. Changes to Recycling Board Rules of Procedure (Wendy Sommer & Farand Kan)

That the Recycling Board adopt the revisions to the Alameda County Source Reduction and Recycling Board Rules of Procedure.

Wendy Sommer and Farand Kan provided a summary of the staff report. A link to the report is available here: [Changes-Rules-of-Procedure-07-12-18](#)

Board member Lamnin inquired if section 3-8, *"Votes at a Committee/Recycling Board meeting where teleconferencing is utilized will be taken by roll call"* is consistent with section 4-12, Roll Call Votes. Ms. Sommer stated that sections 4-12 and 4-13 define what we mean by roll call. If the vote is unanimous there is no requirement for a roll call vote. Board member Lamnin inquired about section 4-4, E (2b),

“offer amendments or substitute motions allowing additional public comment.” Mr. Kan stated that the act is discretionary and the Board may reopen public comment if amendments or substitute motions come into play. Board member Lamnin inquired about section 4-5 (b), *“Motion to Postpone – A motion to postpone indefinitely is debatable.”* Mr. Kan stated that the Board could replace the word “indefinitely” with “to a date uncertain” or other appropriate phrasing to define the intent. Board member Moore stated that he is uncomfortable with the “Motion to reconsider.” For example, if the Board adopts a resolution and two months later a Board member considers it not a good idea can that be considered a motion to reconsider and be placed on the agenda for a second time. Mr. Kan stated no, the motion to reconsider is for more drastic reasons and intended to occur on the same day at the same meeting and the motion must be made by a member who voted on the prevailing side, when the item was first voted upon.

There were no public comments on this item. Board member Lamnin made the motion to approve the staff recommendation with the following revision. In section 4-5 (b), change the word “indefinitely” to the phrase “to a date uncertain.” Board member Martinez seconded and the motion carried 10-0.

The Clerk called the roll:

(Ayes: Buckholz, Camara, Deming, Lamnin, Maass, Martinez, Moore, Oddie, Rood, Southworth. Nays: None. Abstain: None. Absent: None. Vacant: Solid Waste Industry Representative).

4. Food Service Packaging, Litter and Marine Debris (Justin Lehrer)

This item is for information only.

Justin Lehrer provided an overview of the staff report and presented a PowerPoint presentation. A link to the report and the presentation is available here:

[Food-Service-Packaging-Litter-Marine-Debris-07-12-2018](#)

Board member Rood inquired if the green compostable bags are as problematic as the other plastics in the compost stream. Board member Southworth stated that the PLA bags can be processed at newer facilities that utilize the aerated static or turned pile systems. Board member Camara added they consistently attempt to educate their customers on how to properly recycle the myriad of materials as Livermore Sanitation transports their materials to Grover and they are an older facility that cannot process the PLA bags. Ms. Sommer added that it continues to be problematic as the customer is informed that they can recycle these materials but the facility is unable to process certain materials. Mr. Padia added there is a covered aerated static pile (CASP) facility that is in process of ramping up at the Altamont Landfill. Mr. Padia added the Biodegradable Products Institute that certifies the compostable cups, forks, etc. utilizes the ASTM D6400 standard that says that the product will degrade in 180 days in active composting and most local facilities use 40-50 days for degradation, which causes a disconnect between what is certified and what occurs at local compost facilities.

Board member Martinez inquired when working with businesses with the “Reusables is Best campaign,” if we help them to calculate what they are spending on disposables versus what they could be spending. Mr. Lehrer stated yes, there are various videos and case studies in the “Rethink Disposables” campaign that assist with providing this information as well as a \$500 rebate available. Board member Martinez inquired if staff has considered a web-based tool where businesses can input data for analysis. Mr. Lehrer stated that is a good idea. Board member Martinez inquired if there was consideration for developing a food-ware on request initiative akin to the straws on request ordinance. Mr. Lehrer stated that the straws on request initiative is fairly new and he has not witnessed any activity towards the food-ware on request issue. Alexandria Saffold inquired if it would be better if stores stopped issuing plastic bags and only offered paper bags. Mr. Lehrer stated that there is differing data on the impacts of manufacturing paper bags versus the cost to manufacture the less costly plastic bags; however, with respect to the issue of litter and compostability, paper bags are less of an issue in those regards. Board

member Moore commented that Annie Leonard stated that “we cannot recycle our way out of the plastics problem, and we should make the people that put these plastics into the environment clean up their own mess.” Board member Moore inquired if there is any discussion regarding governments banding together to force these companies to pay to clean up their mess. Mr. Lehrer stated that he is not aware of any litigation towards this effort but certainly, EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility) is a policy approach that holds producers responsible for the products that they are putting in the environment.

Board member Martinez inquired of President Oddie if there is an appetite at the state level for introducing legislation for an issue such as food-ware on request. President Oddie stated that his opinion is yes, as we have taken on other bans locally, i.e., plastic bags, straws, etc. the state legislature has come on board but of course there will be opposition from the targeted industries. Board member Lamnin added when there is political will for an issue it also presents an opportunity to invite the affected industries and stakeholders to the table as well. Board member Lamnin added as we are thinking about strategies for the next two years we should also think about how we are engaging the stakeholders. Ms. Natarajan stated that StopWaste is one of the very few local organizations that are partnering with the Ellen MacArthur foundation and they bring the multi-sector partners to the table to talk about solutions. In response to Board member Moore’s question, Ms. Sommer stated that there is an opportunity for doing a compelling video and social media campaign around plastics considering that one posted picture received the most hits. Board member Deming inquired about the use of plastic water bottles at the meeting. Mr. Padia stated that we prohibit plastic water bottles at meetings held at StopWaste but as a courtesy to Board members, we do provide water at the four annual evening meetings that are held at offsite facilities and all bottles are recycled. Alexandra Saffold inquired if there has been an effort to reach out to food establishments with respect to contamination in the recyclables. Mr. Lehrer stated that there are many food service operators that are on board with these efforts but it is often not a top priority and also a different challenge to manage the front of house service area; there is more opportunity to control contamination in the back of house/kitchen area.

President Oddie thanked Mr. Lehrer for his presentation and asked that the presentation be made available to the Board.

VII. OTHER PUBLIC INPUT

There was none.

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS/MEMBER COMMENTS

Board member Lamnin expressed appreciation for receiving the “How to Sort” postcard.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

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2018 - ALAMEDA COUNTY RECYCLING BOARD ATTENDANCE

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
REGULAR MEMBERS												
J. Buckholz				X	X	X	X					
B. Camara	X	X	A	I	X	X	X					
N. Deming							X					
S. Lamnin		X	X	X	X	X	X					
K. Lewis	X	X	A	A								
P. Maass	X	X	X	X	I	X	X					
D. Martinez	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
J. Moore	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
J. Oddie	X	X	X	A	X	X	X					
T. Rood	X	X	X	X	A	X	X					
T. Stein	X	X	X	X	X	A						
S. Vared	X	X	A	X	X	X	I					
INTERIM APPOINTEES												
M. Southworth				X			X					
J. Pentin					X							

Measure D: Subsection 64.130, F: Recycling Board members shall attend at least three fourths (3/4) of the regular meetings within a given calendar year. At such time, as a member has been absent from more than one fourth (1/4) of the regular meetings in a calendar year, or from two (2) consecutive such meetings, her or his seat on the Recycling Board shall be considered vacant.

X=Attended

A=Absent

I=Absent - Interim Appointed

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DATE: August 9, 2018
TO: Recycling Board
FROM: Tom Padia, Deputy Executive Director
SUBJECT: Written Reports of Ex Parte Communications

BACKGROUND

Section 64.130 (Q)(1)(b) of the Alameda County Charter requires that full written disclosure of ex parte communications be entered in the Recycling Board's official record. At the June 19, 1991 meeting of the Recycling Board, the Board approved the recommendation of Legal Counsel that such reports be placed on the consent calendar as a way of entering them into the Board's official record. The Board at that time also requested that staff develop a standard form for the reporting of such communications. A standard form for the reporting of ex parte communications has since been developed and distributed to Board members.

At the December 9, 1999 meeting of the Recycling Board, the Board adopted the following language:

Ex parte communication report forms should be submitted only for ex parte communications that are made after the matter has been put on the Recycling Board's agenda, giving as much public notice as possible.

Per the previously adopted policy, all such reports received will be placed on the consent calendar of the next regularly scheduled Recycling Board meeting.

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DATE: August 9, 2018

TO: Planning Committee/Recycling Board

FROM: Tom Padia, Deputy Executive Director

BY: Meri Soll, Senior Program Manager

SUBJECT: DR3 Mattress Recycling – Facility Relocation Support

SUMMARY

DR3 is a mattress recycling company founded in 1999 in Oakland, now with three locations: Oakland, Stockton, and Woodland. They collect mattresses and box springs for recycling by disassembling the beds by hand to maximize the amount of recyclable materials. DR3 operates under the umbrella of The Society of St Vincent de Paul of Lane County, Oregon, a 501c3 nonprofit. Proceeds from mattress recycling fund services for homeless individuals and families in need. DR3 also provides stable, quality jobs with benefits to local residents. DR3 recently reached out to StopWaste staff to seek potential funding support for the upcoming relocation from their Oakland facility to Livermore after they lost their Oakland lease.

DISCUSSION

DR3 was notified in March 2018 that their current lease at their Oakland DR3 mattress recycling facility (9921 Medford Ave) would not be renewed when it was up at the end of September. After a long search, they were able to stay in Alameda County and secure a lease for a facility in Livermore (7041 Las Positas Road). The new Livermore facility has almost twice as much square footage, which will increase their mattress recycling capacity as well as allow for a potential increase in employees from 24 FTE to 33 FTE in the next 12 months. The Oakland facility currently processes about 14,000 mattresses a month (about 600 a day) and the new larger Livermore facility will permit a substantial increase in recycling capacity as the statewide mattress recycling program continues to grow. In 2017, the Oakland DR3 facility diverted 4.5 million pounds of materials at a 67 percent diversion rate. DR3 anticipates purchasing a larger, more robust baler to reduce equipment breakdowns and accommodate the increased mattress recycling capacity in the new Livermore facility.

Increased lease costs (an additional \$10k per month), new equipment, as well as required site improvements and other relocation expenses are impacting the nonprofit's budget. St. Vincent de Paul staff has asked StopWaste to consider providing funding support to offset the costs of the

relocation. DR3 has estimated relocation costs at about \$95,000, which includes lease down payment, equipment moving and wiring, and other moving activities. (These costs do not include a new baler purchase at \$58,000).

Over the years, we have provided funding support for relocation costs to nonprofit entities in order to retain recycling and reuse infrastructure here in Alameda County. DR3 will be moving in September of 2018 and is in need of funding support in the immediate future. (The Agency's Competitive Grants Funding cycle opens January 2019, with awards distributed in April 2019.)

Staff recommends that StopWaste support DR3 by providing a one-time \$57,500 grant to St Vincent de Paul to offset the following relocation costs:

Business License/Inspections:	\$ 2,700
Architectural and electrical plans:	\$ 6,800
Equipment installation and electrical:	\$14,000
Transport equipment:	<u>\$34,000</u>
TOTAL COSTS COVERED BY GRANT:	\$57,500

Grant funding would come from the Grants to Nonprofit Fund Balance (estimated balance is \$2.1 million as of July 1, 2018).

RECOMMENDATION

Provide a \$57,500 one-time grant to The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (nonprofit entity operating as DR3) to offset facility relocation costs from Oakland to Livermore.



DATE: August 9, 2018

TO: Planning Committee/Recycling Board

FROM: Tom Padia, Deputy Executive Director

BY: Meghan Starkey, Senior Program Manager

SUBJECT: Municipal Panel: Member Agency Schools Programs

SUMMARY

Several times a year, staff assembles a panel of representatives from the member agencies to speak on a topic previously selected by the Recycling Board. The topic for the August Municipal Panel is member agency schools programs. Representatives from Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District, Castro Valley Sanitary District and Oro Loma Sanitary District will share their experiences and insights on the opportunities and challenges of implementing recycling and organics programs and other waste reduction efforts in their schools.

DISCUSSION

Schools programs have been a long-standing focus at StopWaste, and the Agency has worked collaboratively with schools and school districts for more than twenty years.

The Agency provides direct services to public schools ranging from recycling infrastructure support, educational tours at the Davis Street and Fremont transfer stations, and hands-on student action projects with classrooms, schools and their communities. Many member agency staff work directly with schools and school districts as well. Depending on the member agency franchise agreement, schools may receive low- or no-cost services from the franchised service provider. Legally schools can contract separately for service with whomever they select.

The Agency's Mandatory Recycling Ordinance does not apply to public schools since they are considered subdivisions of the state and therefore exempt from local solid waste regulation. Public schools are, however, covered by the state mandatory recycling law (AB 341 - those with four or more cubic yards service/week), as well as the state organics recycling law (AB 1826 – currently covering those with four or more cubic yards of organics generated per week).

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for information only.

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RECYCLING > BUSINESS

Keep Calm and Recycle On: The Sky Isn't Falling

Recycling is a dynamic process forced to change as products evolve and markets fluctuate.

Chaz Miller | Jul 17, 2018

Recycling is in the news and not in a good way. Newspapers and television news shows are full of stories about its apparent death. If they are right, then recycling is doomed in this country. The good news is they are wrong.

Yes, municipal recycling programs are facing serious problems. Clearly this latest crisis will not be resolved overnight. Instead of panicking, however, we should take a deep breath and calm down. Recyclables are just another raw material whose prices fluctuate. The light is clearly shining at the end of this tunnel. It's a long tunnel, and the train is moving slowly, but I see no reason to panic.

Let's look at one "fact" I keep hearing over and over: the idea that the Chinese have banned all recyclables from their country. This is not the case. The government has indeed banned a number of recyclables including unsorted mixed paper and mixed plastics. Those two are the mainstays of municipal recycling programs and we lack sufficient domestic markets, so we do have a problem.

But let's put this in perspective starting with paper. Residential mixed paper is part of the recyclable paper we send to China. We ship far more old corrugated cardboard (OCC) to China than "unsorted" mixed paper. Those boxes are not banned but they are not home free. Like all imported recyclables, they must meet a 0.5 percent contamination requirement.

That is a high barrier. However, commercial source separation programs should be able to meet those limits. In fact, American Chung Nam, the primary recycled paper supplier to Nine Dragons, the largest Chinese user of American wastepaper, recently announced it had won the contract to buy used boxes generated by Walmart from New York, California and three other states. Clearly, it believes those boxes will meet the new limits. Those boxes still face uncertainty over inspection and enforcement procedures. When that uncertainty is resolved, that paper should flow to China as steadily as it has in the past.

Unfortunately, the size of the American papermaking industry has shrunk in the last two decades. While mills still exist that want those raw materials, they are not big enough for all of the paper generated at the curbside and commercially. Cleaner commercial paper and residential paper from dual stream programs are in a better position than single stream paper. Processors with mill contracts also are better positioned than those relying on spot markets.

Nonetheless, hope is on the horizon. Two new mills designed to use this paper have already been announced. Pratt Recycling, the biggest U.S. consumer of residential mixed paper, is building a mill in Ohio. Green Bay Packaging announced in June that it will be replacing its 71-year-old mill with a larger, state-of-the art mill. It, too, will use residential mixed paper and OCC as a raw material. It

probably won't be open until late in 2019, but it represents the reality that entrepreneurs see opportunity in this crisis.

Plastic recyclers also have reason not to abandon hope. Prices for PET and colored HDPE bottles have slowly improved. Consumer products companies are increasing demand because they want to increase their use of recycled content. In addition, two new mixed plastic recycling processing plants have been announced. One will be in Alabama and the other in South Carolina. They will produce pellets for export to Chinese manufacturers.

Shortly after the announcement of these new facilities, the Chinese government confirmed that flake and pellets made from recycled plastics are not subject to the ban. What that government is saying is simple: do the "dirty" work of processing your recyclables in your country and send the end product to manufacturers in our country.

The media also seems to think this is the worst price collapse ever to face recycling. Not true. In the summer of 2008, markets took a stunning six-month dive as a result of the closure of Chinese factories to ensure clean air for the Beijing Olympics and the (unconnected) Great Recession. At the beginning of 2009, prices began an equally stunning rise. That summer they were higher than before the collapse.

Perhaps more relevant to this latest crisis, in 1990, markets collapsed after the dramatic explosion of curbside recycling programs. Yet then, as now, entrepreneurs saw their opportunities and invested in new domestic recycling end markets. We've also seen a number of smaller downturns since municipal recycling restarted itself in 1968. We've survived every one.

Don't get me wrong, we will see low prices for the next 12 to 24 months. The trade war our country is blundering into could easily exacerbate these problems. But I expect markets to return as domestic capacity expands.

Nonetheless, the question remains: Why do we always panic when prices go down? Why don't we learn from previous downturns? In 1998, after a relatively minor price downturn, the White House hosted a Conference on Recycling. Virtually every solution I've heard for saving recycling today was discussed at that conference. We forgot them when Chinese paper mills entered the market and prices rose.

Recycling is not dying. Recycling is a dynamic process forced to change as products evolve and markets fluctuate. Recycling will successfully cope with these latest, very challenging, changes. But this time, can we learn from the past so that I don't have to recycle this column in response?

Chaz Miller is a longtime veteran of the waste and recycling industry. He can be reached at chazmiller9@gmail.com .

Source URL: <https://www.waste360.com/business/keep-calm-and-recycle-sky-isn-t-falling>