



DATE: September 23, 2020

TO: Waste Management Authority Board
Energy Council

FROM: Justin Lehrer, Operations Manager
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SUBJECT: 2020 Priority Setting Process

SUMMARY

StopWaste engages in priority setting every other year to inform the Agency’s budget development, resource allocation, external fund-seeking efforts, and program selection and design for a two-year period. Staff is now launching the 2020 priority setting process, and will seek Board/Energy Council adoption of a new set of two-year priorities at the December 2020 meeting. One important goal of the 2020 priority setting process is for the resulting priorities to reflect the full scope of the Agency’s work, including materials management efforts and the work staff does and that the Energy Council governs to advance clean energy solutions in Alameda County communities (previously the WMA/Recycling Board and EC have conducted separate priority setting processes).

This memo will be accompanied by a staff presentation at the September 23 WMA Board/Energy Council meeting.

DISCUSSION

2020 presents an important opportunity to update the Agency’s priorities

A two-year priority setting process enables the Agency to be responsive to new challenges and opportunities. This ability to be nimble and adaptive has perhaps never been more important than now. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our communities and our work, the increasing urgency of the climate crisis, persistent social and racial disparities, new State-level requirements such as SB 1383, and the growing knowledge that we must take our work to the next level in order to achieve ambitious waste reduction and clean energy goals all point to the need for an updated set of priorities for the Agency. Updated priorities will guide the work of the Agency over the next two fiscal years, through June 2023.

To set the stage for the 2020 priority-setting process and provide a framework for establishing an updated set of Agency priorities, staff drafted a set of objectives for the Board to consider. The 2021 – 2023 Agency priorities should:

- Emphasize upstream, systemic solutions that reflect the full scope of the Agency’s work, including waste reduction and clean energy efforts
- Integrate the pursuit of racial and social equity into operations and programs
- Provide a framework to reorient programs in light of challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic
- Set a positive, forward-thinking direction that inspires staff and member agencies
- Increase the Agency’s capacity to evaluate and communicate the results of its work, and to re-imagine our collective efforts to achieve next-level results
- Provide actionable guidance on how to prioritize Agency spending, consistent with guiding documents such as the County Integrated Waste Management Plan and Recycling Plan

Background on the Agency’s priority-setting process

Historically, the Agency’s priorities have been established through two parallel processes, with differing outcomes. Since July 2013, the Energy Council has adopted two-year priorities for *program areas* to guide staff in external fund-seeking and developing pilot programs. The Waste Management Authority Board and the Recycling Board initiated their first joint, two-year priority setting process in 2016, which resulted in the WMA-adopted *Guiding Principles* that help clearly communicate the Agency’s main priorities to staff, member agencies, and partners in the community. Going forward, staff will work with the WMA Board, Recycling Board, and the Energy Council to facilitate a priority setting process that reflects the full scope of Agency programs and efforts, while also recognizing that the energy efforts are primarily externally funded.

Energy Council

In 2010 the WMA Board adopted a 10-year work plan to guide activities through 2020. Two key tenets of the plan were to retain a multiple-benefits approach and to diversify the Agency’s revenue stream beyond landfill-based tonnage fees. Consistent with that plan, the green building program was successful in securing multiple grants, including several million dollars in economic stimulus funding. In 2012 the WMA directed staff to develop a more formal governance structure for seeking energy-related grants and other third party funding. This led to the formation of a second Joint Powers Authority in 2013, the Energy Council, to advance clean and efficient energy solutions alongside effective materials management.

The Energy Council adopted the following priorities for 2018 – 2020, which are organized by program areas:

- Building efficiency

- Electrification
- Grid solutions
- Member agency services
- Zero net carbon

These program priorities have guided staff efforts in securing grants funded by the California Energy Commission and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District as well as maintaining a leadership role in the Bay Area Regional Energy Network (BayREN) partnership. Program activities include:

- Catalyzing the residential heat pump water heater market
- Reducing barriers to investment in energy efficiency in multifamily buildings
- Advocating for consideration of embodied carbon in energy programs
- Assisting member agencies with climate action plan implementation
- Coordinating with East Bay Community Energy on program targeting

Waste Management Authority

Starting in 2016, the WMA, in conjunction with the Recycling Board, began setting priorities for the Agency on a two-year cycle to dovetail with the existing 10-year work plan and to employ a more timely and adaptive approach to strategic planning. To date, this process has resulted in a set of Guiding Principles, the first set of which was adopted in 2016 and the current set adopted in 2018, which are:¹

- Emphasize waste prevention over management of discards.
- Organics, as the largest remaining portion of the waste stream going to landfill, will continue to be an emphasis for the next two years.
- Only consider mandatory measures that go through a comprehensive resource analysis, or are mandated by the State.
- Prioritize waste reduction and prevention projects that have beneficial climate impacts.
- Explore innovative and experimental approaches that may be leveraged by member agencies.
- Emphasize project implementation and collect data only as needed to make informed decisions.
- Coordinate and collaborate with local public agencies to avoid duplication of effort, and prioritize efforts that leverage and enhance what member agencies can do independently.
- Ensure the flexibility to add new projects and cut back on existing projects when appropriate.

¹ StopWaste 2018 - 2020 Guiding Principles are also available at <http://www.stopwaste.org/about-stopwaste/who-we-are/guiding-principles>.

These Guiding Principles have informed the Agency's work in many important and tangible ways, including, but not limited to:

- Increasingly high priority given to food waste prevention through projects such as the Stop Food Waste campaign and assistance and tools developed to promote and enable edible food recovery and donation.
- Ongoing efforts to divert organic materials from the landfill, such as through implementation of the Mandatory Recycling Ordinance.
- Coordination with member agencies to conduct training on compost application and to incorporate innovative carbon farming practices into city climate action plans.
- Convening member agency staff to coordinate SB 1383 implementation efforts.
- Shift in focus from exploring mandatory food service ware policy to development of upstream pilot projects that build reusable food ware infrastructure.

Recycling Board

The Guiding Principles adopted by the WMA Board are developed through a joint process with the Recycling Board. Measure D, the county charter amendment that established the Recycling Board, mandates that the Recycling Board implement a comprehensive source reduction and recycling program. This is further outlined in the Recycling Plan, which extends through 2020 and is currently being updated. While creating and updating this Plan is the legal obligation of the Recycling Board as a distinct entity, it is designed to be complementary to and consistent with the WMA's goals, objectives and strategies and therefore it informs Agency priority-setting. This reflects the administration of the Recycling Board and the WMA as one agency (StopWaste) that jointly implements programs that fulfill the aims and requirements of each Board.

Timeline and next steps for the 2020 priority setting process

Between September and December 2020, staff will facilitate a series of presentations and discussions with the WMA Board and its committees, Recycling Board, Energy Council, member agency staff, and other partners to gather input on the priorities that will guide Agency efforts for the next two years. Staff will request that the WMA Board and Energy Council consider adoption of a new set of two-year priorities in December.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for information only.