

Meeting Summary
Natural Resources and Technical Services (NRTS) Committee
September 26, 2017, 4:00 p.m.

Committee Members: John Young (Chair), John Morris, Heather Payne, Ruchir Vora, Bob Morgan (ex officio)

Other Board Members: Yinka Ayankoya, Ray DuBose

Staff: Mary Tiger, Mary Darr, Todd Taylor, Ed Kerwin, Ruth Rouse, Pat Davis, John Kiviniemi

Public: Blair Pollock, Orange County Solid Waste Planner

The NRTS Committee met to review and discuss next steps for a potential biogas-to-energy (B2E) project at the Mason Farm Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) and potential options for evaluating the best use of OWASA land.

Biogas-to-Energy (Attachment 1 in Agenda Package)

John Young introduced the topic by providing a quick overview of the Board history for potential B2E project:

1. The Board is interested in a potential B2E project.
2. Staff would like to hire a consultant to evaluate the feasibility of B2E options further; Board requested that staff seek potential partnerships for B2E prior to determining whether to fund a consultant study.

Mary Tiger provided a brief history of OWASA's exploration of a B2E strategy, including:

- In 2011, OWASA engaged a consulting firm to evaluate B2E alternatives. The feasibility study recommended the best alternative was to use fats, oils and grease (FOG) to fuel a combined heat and power facility at the WWTP. Given some significant outstanding questions regarding the assurance of FOG supply and space requirements for a receiving station, OWASA did not move forward with the recommended B2E strategy.
- The 2017 Energy Management Plan revisited the assumptions in the feasibility study, as well as technological and regulatory advancements, and summarized 7 options to beneficially use biogas generated at the WWTP which Mary reviewed during the meeting. In the initial version of the Plan, staff recommended that OWASA engage a technical consultant to verify technological and economic assumptions.
- At that time, the Board requested we explore B2E partnership opportunities with local governments and others in the region and for the NRTS Committee to consider the results of those meetings. Attachment 1 in agenda package summarizes the results of those meetings.

John laid out some options for the Committee:

1. Go to Board of Directors with recommendation to hire a consultant to evaluate B2E alternatives
2. Reconvene after staff attended a national workshop on potential B2E opportunities where OWASA's data would be used as a case study
3. Wait to hire consultant to evaluate B2E after a partner(s) has been identified

The key Committee recommendations were:

- Committee reconvene to discuss the information staff learn during the workshop
- Staff obtain further information from North Carolina utilities that are or will soon be implementing a B2E project
- Committee would provide recommendation to Board at a later date

Other discussion during the meeting was that any future consultant evaluation should evaluate options for resiliency, greenhouse gas savings, and cost.

Potential Options to Evaluate the Best Use of OWASA Land (Attachment 2 of Agenda Package)

Ruth Rouse provided an overview of the land OWASA owns and the functions of the land it owns in meeting our mission of providing high quality and reliable water, wastewater and reclaimed water services. Strategic Initiative 6 of the [Strategic Plan](#) includes an action to evaluate the land assets to see if they are needed, the degree of ownership needed, and if an asset should be sold. Attachment 2 of the agenda packet laid out four options to evaluate the land. Staff's recommendation is that no evaluation be done and that OWASA retain its land to provide flexibility in meeting our core mission in the future.

Key comments from Committee members during the discussion included:

- A simple analysis may help the Board determine whether we should eliminate the action from the strategic plan. Other helpful information would be case studies from OWASA or land conservancy organizations on where easements have and have not adequately protected land
- We may learn a lot about certain parcels as we move through the forest management process
- It would be useful to do an assessment of OWASA lands to determine which land has the highest watershed protection values. Lower ranked land could be sold to purchase additional higher value land in the watersheds
- It is difficult for public entities to purchase land, and OWASA should retain all its land

The Committee was unanimous that no evaluation should be completed at this time as it would be beneficial to go through the forest management process first and that process is higher priority.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:30 PM.

Prepared by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ruth C. Rouse".

Ruth Rouse, AICP
Planning and Development Manager