

Composting Facility Permit Discussion

Utilities Committee
Wed, Oct 12, 2022 4:30PM

Director Chris Shaw (Utilities) 14:21

I do have one non budget item. It's our WPDES permit's going to be reissued January 1, '23. And we've been asking for compost to be included. I've kept the committee briefed on this. They have not come back and said we can have a compost facility at the facility. All right? So, we still have it out at the county. There isn't any reason why we can't continue to do that for the next couple of years. But it's unknown whether or not we'll be able to have a compost facility in the city of Appleton. So, I'm just bringing it out there.

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 15:00

Okay, thank you for that update. I definitely want to keep an eye on what's going on with that compost situation because I think that, you know, we have a great legacy and we have a lot of investment in bringing biosolids composting to Wisconsin as a pioneer. So, I'd like to see us be able to continue that that work in a full robust fashion with an appropriate facility in the future. All right, any questions from committee here? Aldersperson Schultz.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 15:33

Just a follow up, Director Shaw. Do you have a sense of why you haven't heard back on the biosolids composting? Is there is there any indication of what the—?

Director Chris Shaw (Utilities) 15:41

Chairperson Meltzer mentioned it. We're the, you know, a leader, and so it's difficult for the state to do anything this new. So, if you're the first—right?—every decision in their decision tree has to be run through, you know, risk assessment, you know—I mean, all kinds of things that they're just not normally used to doing. So. Just it is what it is.

Director Chris Shaw (Utilities) 16:09

And placing a compost facility in a metropolitan area, there is just some just general issues with like odor, what would it do? And we should have those same concerns too. We have the ability to do certain things, and some things we can't do. So, before we invest, we, you know, we've reduced it to the building. We're going to try—we were going to compost within the facility. But we have to be given the okay to be able to actually do it at all. Right? So, we don't have any authority to do it unless we have permission from the DNR at the facility. It would be considered a new outfall under the permit. And we can't take biosolids compost out of that facility. We can't create it and take it out of that facility. We can do it at the county. It's already approved out there. So, it's just.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 16:57

It seemed like with some of the known knowns like odor, we know what we've done in the past couple of years out there, how that might affect something more—

Director Chris Shaw (Utilities) 17:04

That's just one issue. Yeah,

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 17:06

But certain the other issues...

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Director Chris Shaw (Utilities) 17:07

Yeah.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 17:08

...similar path. It's not like we've not done this before. So, you know—

Director Chris Shaw (Utilities) 17:12

But remember, we're selling it. We're doing all kinds of stuff. There's no record keeping for this. So, this is, this is new for the DNR. When I talked about risk, they don't have Class A compost biosolids compost facility. So, they, I think they—you know, there's a concern from them, that they're taking on a risk.

Alderson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 17:31

Do you feel that maybe the issues that we're experiencing statewide with staffing and that kind of thing, is that maybe affecting their capacity for workload and affecting this at all? Or is it really just kind of more the different hoops they have to jump through because of the novelty?

Director Chris Shaw (Utilities) 17:46

I don't want to speak on it? I mean, I really don't know.

Alderson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 17:50

Okay.

Director Chris Shaw (Utilities) 17:52

I would speak on it. I mean. I just don't know.

Alderson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 17:54

Well, thank you. I'd like to think that there's, you know, just kind of something holding things back and at some point, the floodgates will open and a lot of work will move forward again.

Director Chris Shaw (Utilities) 18:05

Yeah, we just did a second submittal of all of the information from the Oshkosh, UW Oshkosh, study. Our own internal data. So, they've got everything from us. We've done everything, and then some to make it work.

Alderson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 18:19

Oh, thank you. Thank you very much for all that work that you and your staff have been doing.

Director Chris Shaw (Utilities) 18:24

I'll relay that to staff.

Alderson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 18:25

Thank you.