COLUMBIA COUNTY
Department of Public Works

ST. HELENS, OR 97051
1054 Oregon St.
Direct (503) 397–5090
Fax (503) 397–7215
publicworks@co.columbia.or.us
www.co.columbia.or.us

Minutes from **Thursday, May 7, 2026, Solid Waste Advisory Committee hybrid meeting at 10 a.m. on Microsoft Teams and in person**

SWAC Committee

- In Attendance
  - Austin Carter-Nadeau – Public Member, Rainier – At-Large
  - Samantha Hawkins – Public Member, St Helens – At-Large
  - Nick Ries – Industrial Representative – WM
  - Greg Rouse – Industrial Representative Alternate (in-progress) – WM
  - Kanale Tumlinson – Industrial Representative Alternate – Waste Connections
  - Derek Ranta – Industrial Representative Alternate – Waste Connections
  - Tatum Flowers – Columbia County Department of Public Works Solid Waste Coordinator
  - Mike Russell – Columbia County Department of Public Works Solid Waste Administrator

- Absent
  - Brandon Lesowske – Public Member, Scappoose – At-Large

Regular Session 10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Meeting was officially brought to order at 10:01 a.m.

Approve February Minutes – minutes were approved as written at 10:04 a.m.

Solid Waste Overview (10am-10:30am)

- **Budget overview**

Mike Russell went over the solid waste budget and the $800,000 the Board took from the solid waste franchise agreement fees. The division receives franchise agreement fees for administering the agreements and ensuring services meet the needs of the community and roughly gets ~$130,000 each year. The Board took 5 years' worth of fees. We hope this won't impact on the budget, but we may need to raise solid waste collection fees as a result.

- **Sharps concerns**

There has been as ongoing illegal dumping problem of sharps on Pittsburg Rd. The solid waste division is working on resolving the issue by posting signs about proper disposal and sending letters to neighbors in the area. Minimal reports of illegal dumping have occurred in the past few months. More residents are now aware of the issue and our free program.

- **Paving at the TS**

A paving and striping project at the transfer station will occur this summer. As a result, the transfer station will be closed for two days. The solid waste division will notify all parties in advance about the closure and project status.

- **Battery Drop-off Program**

In March, the solid waste division created a free residential battery drop-off program at the transfer station. Residents can now drop off batteries at any time to the scale house. This is to prevent fires in trucks and waste facilities and increase access to proper disposal.

- **Dump Stoppers Program** – The program is a collaborative effort involving Land Development Services, Solid Waste, and Community Justice work crew to clean up dumpsites (~$1,000/month). The tipping fees are ~ $2,000/year. Dave Carlberg records the cases and investigates dumpsites as the Columbia County Code Compliance Specialist.
    - **Jan-April 2026:** 19, March has the highest count at 10
    - **Top areas for complaints:** Scappoose/Vernonia Highway (4), Apiary Road (4)
    - **Top issues:** illegal dumping of sharps on Pittsburg Rd

- **Sharps Container Exchange Program** started Oct 2016 and expanded to five Fire Districts in April 2021. We collect registrant sheets at the transfer station and remote fire stations as well as full sharps containers.
    - **Registrant Data**
        - **Total: 1,556 up 105 from 2025**
            - TS: 1,248
            - Scappoose: 127
            - Vernonia: 79
            - Clatskanie: 97
            - Rainier: 5
    - **Sharps Purchased**
        - Feb: 10 boxes = $624.60 March: 10 boxes = $619.90 April: 10 boxes = $727.50
        - Feb-April 2026 purchased 600 containers, total= $1,972.
    - **Advertising sharps program**
        - Tatum worked with Jeff and the Traffic and Safety Committee to develop sharps signs. Jeff posted the signs along Pittsburg Rd, which we've received multiple complaints about illegal dumping of sharps. Signs have been well received and bring awareness to the issue.
        - Next: we can promote the program for people who have to get on medication and it is a resource that can use knowing it will be disposed of properly and it's free. Most time people on medications have to spend a lot of money on the cost of medications, etc. and this is a way to help alleviate the costs and provide a service to ratepayers.

- **Battery Drop-off Program**
    - Began in mid-March. Started after Tatum noticed that a lot of staff time was involved with tapping or bagging batteries. Batteries are in everything nowadays and they can cause fires in garbage trucks and waste facilities. One Drum is a solution to reduce staff time from bagging batteries, accept a larger variety of batteries, reduces the risks of fires and it is a relatively low cost program ($3,000) and no cost to residents. Battery stewardship law just passed and in 2029 the battery program costs should be covered by the producers.
- **Mattress Recycling Events**
    - Free events for recycling of mattresses and box springs. 5 units maximum.
    - March 14, June 13, Sept 12, Nov 14. 8am-12pm at the transfer station.

- **Transfer Station**
  - **TS maintenance and repairs**
    - **Aerator**
      - Pump installed.
    - **Paving and Striping**
      - Two-weekday closure of the transfer station to slurry seal the pavement. Striping will occur on a regular business day. To be completed by late August.

- **Pilot ReUse Program Updates**
  - **Container Issues**
    - Issues resolved.
  - **ReUse Center Report – Material Diverted from the Landfill.**
    - January: 4,820 lbs
    - February: 8,120lbs
    - March: 7,620 lbs
    - April: 11,380 lbs
    - Total: 31,940 lbs = 15.97 tons compared to the first three months of the program Oct-Dec ~ 7,447 lbs (tonnage tripled from last quarter) Material is moving well and out to partners in the county.
    - Hot items: life jacket, furniture, lumber, home goods, sewing machine, mannequins,
    - Partners: H4H, Top Notch, Crunchy Littles, McBride School, St. Helens Library
    - Looking at presenting this program at conferences for 2027.

  - **Household Hazardous Waste Collection Program**
    - St Helens – Feb 28
      - Car count: 238
      - 45% first timers
      - Mostly from St. Helens and Scappoose
      - Advertisements ranked: Columbia County Website, Word of Mouth and Facebook.
      - When you think of waste, what is the most important message to you?
        - 93% environmental benefits, 3% social, 3% financial
      - Vernonia – April 11
        - Car count: 99
        - 53% first timers
        - Advertisements: 31% word of mouth, 24% word of mouth, 24% local paper (Vernonia Voice)

Executive Session (10:30am-12pm)

Next SWAC meeting will on Thursday August 6, 2026, from 10am to 11:30am virtually and at Healy Hall, Public Works Department 1054 Oregon St, St. Helens, OR.