Middle Bay Off The Table In Composting Discussion

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Middle Bay residents can finally rest easy – the city’s proposed composting facility will not be built there. That announcement came from Mayor Pat Branson during a city council work session last (Monday) night.

The decision keep the composting facility out of Middle Bay came after more than two hours of presentations and discussion among the council members to try and find a solution to the biosolids issue in Kodiak.

In June 2012, the city was notified by the Kodiak Island Borough that biosolids would no longer be accepted at the landfill. But long before then, the city had been looking at alternative methods of handling the waste, which comes from city, borough and Coast Guard residents. One option on the table was to compost the biosolids into a usable, and perhaps even marketable, material. The city contracted with the engineering firm CH2M HILL to build a pilot composting site and evaluate the feasibility of such a project in Kodiak. Other options, such as incineration of the waste, were considered, but composting proved to be the most realistic, sustainable and cost effective.

The city sought out Quayanna Development Corporation as a potential contractor for the composting and began looking at Middle Bay as an option, based on industrial-zoned land availability. The proposed facility quickly drew criticism from Middle Bay residents, and delayed permitting from the Department of Environmental Conservation made it impossible for the city to begin composting by the landfill’s cut off date of December 15, 2012. However, quick collaboration between the city and borough led to a short term class B composting operation at the landfill, but that will be required to stop by August 15.

During last night’s work session, City Manager Aimee Kniaziowski said the council needed to decide on short and long term solutions for handling the biosolid waste. Right off the bat, council members agreed that Middle Bay should be taken off the table and a permanent Class A composting facility at the landfill should be the long term option. Kniaziowski said that based on preliminary discussions with the borough, that option is definitely a possibility.

-- (Composting 2 :42 “We’ve had preliminary ... a land lease agreement.”)

Because of the delay in the rezone at the landfill, the work that needs to be done to the area after that and the necessary permitting that will be required, Kniaziowski said she’s fairly certain that a class A facility will not be up and running by the August 15 deadline. If that is the case, she said the council will need to find an interim solution.

Discussion quickly focused on two particular short term solutions: stockpiling the waste or shipping it off island. Councilman Rich Walker said he thought the city should look at stockpiling well before considering shipment.

-- (Composting 3 :17 “I am totally against shipping … thrown out there.”)

The Coast Guard has offered a possible site for stockpiling, but also said that it could only be done for six months. Another location option for stockpiling is at Gibson Cove, below Dead Man’s Curve. Other council members weren’t OK with that solution because it would mean placing and removing the waste, much of which would be unfit for composting after it’s stored for a certain amount of time. Councilman Gabriel Saravia said he didn’t care which method the council chose, as long as it was the cheapest.

-- (Composting 4 :26 “For me, in my opinion, I support… in my opinion.”)

In the end, Councilman Terry Haines asked Kniaziowski to begin discussion with the borough about a permanent composting facility at the landfill. Branson jumped in to ask for more information on the two short term solutions so the council could better decide between the two.

-- (Composting 5 :33 “I would officially suggest … a lot of shaking heads.”)

The assembly will make an official motion about that course of action during its next meeting on February 28.

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