

Good Afternoon:

For the record, my name is Thomas Kennedy. I am the Executive Director of the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning. The Regional Planning Commission is unique since we also manage two solid waste districts: the Southern Windsor/Windham Solid Waste District and the Greater Upper Valley Solid Waste District.

The Greater Upper Valley Solid Waste District has been committed to developing programs and facilities for the collection and treatment of organics. In 2017, the GUV, partnered with Grow Compost to develop a small- scale compost facility on GUV's property in North Hartland, VT.

In 2018, the DEC developed a cost share program to support the organics ban by providing funding for building of facilities and equipment to manage organics. Prior to making an application to the cost share program, the GUV entered a public private partnership with Grow Compost and Agric-Cycle of Exeter, Maine to collect and manage organics. The GUV was awarded grant funds to construct an organic transfer station and last fall commenced construction of the facility with opening date of mid-June of this year.

While the transfer station is being constructed, the GUV, Grow Compost and Agric-Cycle entered into an agreement with ALVA Waste Services, located in Springfield, VT to accept organics at their transfer station.

I am very happy to say that over 4000 tons of organics have been transferred through the facility in Springfield in the past year.

I apologize for the level of detail, but I wanted the Committee to understand the amount of effort and expense that has been made to meet Vermont's goal of banning organics.

Concerns related to the proposed changes to the legislation:

The delay in the implementation will have an adverse impact on organizations that have already made the investment in the development of facilities and equipment. This includes farmers who collect organics, haulers and other solid waste district such as Lamoille and Windham to name a few.

Grow Compost and Agri-Cycle are expanding its customer base. They provide services to grocery stores, institutions, commercial facilities, multi-family complexes and condominiums. The delay in implementation will have an adverse impact that evolving customer base.

The legislation as proposed seeks to address market instability. Presently, there are no issues with the organic markets, in fact, the amount of organics being collected is down approximately 20 to 30% due to the closure of many businesses. This has resulted in placing less stress on the collection system.

The legislation as proposed seeks to address the availability of workers and worker safety. Entities that are collecting organics have been able to maintain an employee base for the collection of organics and have instituted COVID 19 protocols in order to keep their employees and customers safe.

Five years ago, many organizations started planning for the organics ban. These parties started to plan for its implementation by participating in DEC cost-share program, developing partnerships, and making the investment. However, there have been other parties who have resisted the program, who have said it won't work, its too expensive and in general made little or no effort to gear up for the eventual ban and may be using, but hopefully not, the State of Emergency as an excuse to delay the implementation.

I appreciate the concern of DEC with the COVID – 19 state of emergency and their concerns for the safety of workers and consumers and potential market instability. The proposal of DEC seems to be a blunt instrument for a problem that currently doesn't exist with organics. I suggest we wait and see how much longer the state of emergency lasts before we take actions that may have a detrimental impact on Vermont's organics program.