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First I want to thank Ed McAndrew, Mark Witkowski and Kassie Thelman, who last week took members of Sustainable Sullivan on a tour of the Monticello transfer station. Yesterday we visited the recycling facility in Beacon. Net result, we all have a deeper appreciation of the county's waste-management challenges and even greater respect for the job DPW is doing today.

Also since this committee last met: UCRRA, the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency, announced it was putting its landfill plans on hold. Instead, it will focus on waste reduction and recovering materials through reuse, recycling, composting and alternative technologies¹, driving down the total amount of trash that needs to be disposed of with a series of incremental waste-diversion goals reaching, quote, "zero waste" by 2050.

The term "zero waste" is shorthand for efforts to divert 85 to 90 percent of waste from disposal in landfills or incinerators, acknowledging that even the best processes and technologies still result in residual material that must be disposed of.²

Waste diversion is a mainstream idea. Even the DEC's [2023 Statewide Solid Waste Management Plan](#) calls for 85% diversion from landfills and incinerators by 2050. The plan estimates that "at least 80% of the material currently sent to landfills or combustion facilities has monetary value, either directly as material that could be used to produce goods or has other beneficial uses, or indirectly through the creation of recycling sector jobs."

Sullivan would do well to look to Ulster as a model —both in terms of its renewed focus on diversion and how the county approaches this difficult decision-making process. If there's one thing that's become evident over the past several years, it's that decisions around waste management are too fraught to be made by elected officials. Instead, you could delegate that responsibility to the DPW, who understands the county's waste situation better than anyone. Or you could create an independent agency like UCRRA.

But whoever you task with determining the future of waste management in Sullivan, this legislature should support a transparent, inclusive process that protects our environment and respects our communities.

¹ UCRRA's goals are to divert waste out of landfills and incinerators. There are many ways to meet these goals, but we are looking at alternative technologies as one pathway. The alternative technologies we are looking at are bio-gasification, hydrolysis, pyrolysis, mechanical separation (aka dirty MRF), and anything else that is out there that does not harm the environment through emissions, or at least minimal emissions. Email from Marc Rider, Jun 9, 2025.

² [UCRRA press release, 5/27/25](#).

Speaking of respect, we have found DPW, to be very responsive and open to input from Sustainable Sullivan. Such willingness to work together could be extended to the creation of a waste management committee to inform the decision-making process.

This body should be led by DPW; populated with local scientists, engineers, educators, and researchers; and tasked with learning as much as possible about all the various options. Only this way can we ensure that the county lands on a successful solution that is sustainable over the long term.