Waste-to-Energy 25 Years Later:

Technology with a Past, Present and Future

Federation of New York
Solid Waste Associations
Solid Waste/Recycling Conference

May 2005

John F. Williams, SVP
National Director of Governmental Planning and Consulting
1970’s and Early 1980’s and a Major Problem: What to do with Garbage?

- Local landfills were filling
- Landfill regulations were becoming more stringent
- Long distance shipping was not economically viable
- Long distance disposal was not socially acceptable
Garbage to Steam/Electricity Made Sense: Could Reduce Land Disposal

- 180 operating facilities
- Majority survived Greenpeace and opportunists
- Survived the Clean Air Act Amendments
- Clean energy generator

Westchester County Resource Recovery Facility
Peekskill, New York
The Tables Turned in the 1990’s

- Tax law changes shifted project economics
- District and Supreme Court rulings against flow control
- Cheap tipping fees at remote mega landfills

Delaware Waste-to-Energy Facility
Dover, Delaware
Quite a Ride: Ups

- Excitement of a terrific solution
- Avoiding a repeat of Superfund
- Waste material into needed energy
- Self sufficiency
- Championing a good solution

MacArthur Resource Recovery Facility
Islip, New York
There Were the Downs

- Waste-to-energy involved big money
- Attracted political and financial agendas
- Recycling was the “good way”
- Waste-to-energy did not count
Percentage race begin

Elected officials were targeted

Staff were branded as liars and puppets

Consultants shrank in stature
91 Facilities Operate Today

- 28 states
- Managing 14 percent of America’s trash
- Quiet servants
- Recovering scrap metal

Hennepin County Resource Recovery Facility
Hennepin County, Minnesota
Hosting other forms of recycling

Home to household hazardous waste operations

Source of host community fees

Viable alternatives to long-haul disposal

Indianapolis Resource Recovery Facility
Indianapolis, Indiana
Accomplishments without Threatened Impacts

- Activist newsletters
- Organizations aimed at raising funds
- Subscription and fear campaigns
Promises Made, Promises Kept and Lessons Learned Over Time

- Majority of plants operate today

- They promised:
  - To conserve fossil fuels by generating electricity
  - Provide clean energy
  - Reduce greenhouse gas
  - Save real estate
  - Compatible with recycling
  - Provide economic benefits

French Island Waste-to-Energy Facility
LaCrosse County, Wisconsin
Disasters that Weren’t

- Asthma, Cancer, and dioxins
- Ash handling and disposal ailments
- Ash is a resource

Hudson Falls Resource Recovery Facility
(formerly Adirondack Resource Recovery Facility)
Hudson Falls, New York
European Union: waste-to-energy preferable to landfills

European Union directives to minimize landfills

Mass burn and refuse derived fuel have worked in the United States

Consideration for emerging technologies
Renegotiate
Re-bid
Purchase
Sell
Realign contract structure
Some combination

Union County Resource Recovery Facility
Union, New Jersey
North East Solid Waste Committee: 23 Communities in Massachusetts

- Privately-owned and operated facility
- New economic and strategic plan
- 22 of 23 members in post-2005 contracts
- Dramatically changing risk allocation
- Cut cost to communities by over 50%
Privately owned and operated facility

Analyzing options prior to 2008 termination

Feasibility and cost assessments

Community legal rights analysis

Transfer station condition assessment
Pinellas County Resource Recovery Facility

- Publicly owned – privately operated facility
- Mass burn with front end processing
- Two major improvement projects
- Private operation contract expires in 2007
- Currently preparing a new competitive process
Regulatory and Public Issues

- Restrictions in flow control
- Closure of some facilities in 1994
- Little support for waste flow control
- New legislative attempts stalled
- Waste-to-energy will only happen if industry helps
Conclusion: 25 Years Later

- We were right
- Waste-to-energy is a terrific solution
- Promises were kept
- Significant effort to keep the plants operating
- Expiring service agreements
- Opportunity to securing new pricing
- Favorable new operating contracts
We Owe Thanks

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- N.C. Vasuki, Delaware Solid Waste Authority
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- Tim Hunt, Palm Beach County
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- Scott Daniels, Dutchess County
- Joseph Murdoch, City of Tampa
- Joyce Doughty, Fairfax County
- Robin Davidov, Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority
- Dozens of others
- Elected and un-elected officials
Final Reminder: Practicing and New Leaders

- Continue to look
- Do more with less
- Resources yet to be discovered
- The community garbage can

I-95 Energy/Resource Recovery Facility
Fairfax, Virginia
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