THE DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCING OF THE NORTHEAST MASSACHUSETTS (NESWC) RESOURCE RECOVERY PROJECT:
A Tale of Twenty-Two Cities and Towns

HAROLD J. YAFFE
Roy F. Weston, Inc.
Burlington, Massachusetts

JONATHAN WOOTEN
Smith Barney, Harris Upham & Co., Inc.
New York, New York

Discussion by

Marjorie A. Franklin
Franklin Associates, Ltd.
Prairie Village, Kansas

This paper describes well the complexities of implementing a large resource recovery facility. Indeed, those of us who have been “tracking” these facilities for years are most interested to see the NESWC project coming to completion.

The essential elements of a resource recovery project: waste supply, energy market, siting, technology selection, environmental requirements, and financing are all addressed in this paper. Of these elements, the NESWC project was unusually complex with respect to obtaining waste supply from 22 communities and in arranging financing. I concur with the authors when they recommend avoiding these complications if possible.

While residue disposal is not a major issue in this paper, I must comment that the project will be unusually fortunate if a productive use of the residue is found. Resource recovery planners in other states are being told that their fly ash may be treated as a hazardous waste, and this is causing real concern. I believe we will be hearing more about this issue at future meetings.

Discussion by

Robert Vander Molen
Combustion Power Company
Menlo Park, California

The following comments are related from the point of view of a person more concerned with the marketing aspect of a project than the financial.

First, I think it is fair to say that this paper is a welcome overview of all aspects of the various agreements to be negotiated and problems to be overcome in a project of this magnitude. While dealing with 22 separate municipalities is a task to be wished only on one’s favorite enemy, this was then heaped with numerous hardships. It certainly is a credit of the movers and shakers that the project is being accomplished. One has to be careful, though, in thinking that this project contained an inordinate amount of complications and I think the authors put it succinctly when stating that “... the human tendency to underestimate long-term difficulties caused by short-term project objectives will continue to plague many resource recovery projects.”

It was clearly pointed out that one of the key features of any resource recovery project is to line up guaranteed waste (fuel) supplies. Not mentioned, though, was the
equally important feature of ensuring long range contracts for energy. For many resource recovery projects, this may be the showstopper.

The authors made passing mention that one of this project's obstacles was that of competing projects in the area. As resource recovery becomes more and more prevalent, I am afraid that this may become a larger obstacle in the future.

Finally, I wish to congratulate the authors in writing a thorough and easily understandable discussion of an obviously complex situation.