THE GREATER BRIDGEPORT REGIONAL RESOURCE RECOVERY PROJECT: A WASTE-TO-ENERGY REINCARNATION

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The paper titled "The Greater Bridgeport Regional Resource Recovery Project: A Waste-to-Energy Reincarnation" is an example of how 3Ps, Planning, Patience and Persuasion, worked for fourteen municipalities in the State of Connecticut for a successful waste-to-energy project. The authors depicted a vivid chronology of the events that took place during the last two decades. It is remarkable that these municipalities worked together for a common goal with a strong commitment for such a project.

The authors made an excellent presentation on how the overall process took place in selecting contractors, facility sizes, waste availability, community support and participating municipalities' willingness and commitment in risk assessment and allocation, and contract negotiations. The three basic requirements, suggested by the authors, for a successful regional project are long-term commitment, political leadership, and the willingness to negotiate. Public participation and community support are extremely sensitive and critical issues. These issues may deserve further elaboration. One could cite numerous examples of how waste-to-energy projects did not come to fruition because of local community support.

The authors may want to elaborate on several economic and technical issues. For example, it would be helpful to know: capital and operation and maintenance costs for the RDF and Mass Burn Plants; tipping fees for old and new facilities; revenues from power sales; and recycled materials. From a technical viewpoint, it would be useful to know why the authority switched from the RDF to Mass Burn technology. The authors claim "the environmental tests on the facility's air emissions are among the best in the world." A comparison of emission data with published data from similar plants would substantiate the authors' claim.

In summary, this is an excellent paper which describes how planning, a lot of patience and persuasion could result in a successful regional waste-to-energy project. The commitment of participating municipalities and its leadership will provide ideas and help other municipalities who are considering a regional project.

Discussion by
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The authors are to be commended for their success in implementing the project as well as their thorough
Discussion of the necessary ingredients to achieve success. Although most of the items discussed seem rather obvious, it is alarming that so many neglect one or more and suffer defeat.

All the topics discussed are important and, in fact, necessary, but two stand out for special attention. First is the necessity for long-term commitment of Public Officials. With this, even the most difficult problems can normally be resolved as is evident by the Bridgeport project. Without it, even the slightest distraction can bring down a strong project. Unfortunately, political leadership and commitment in the face of adversity does not exist in every community.

Of equal importance is the last item mentioned, "the willingness to negotiate." It is interesting that the authors focused on willingness rather than ability. I would agree that the important factor is the understanding that over the course of the project, many changes will occur and it is necessary to recognize these changes and be "willing" to consider and discuss how they affect the various parties and agreements.

Discussion by

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The authors of this paper present a history of the Greater Bridgeport Regional Resource Recovery Project. The paper demonstrates that with support and cooperation, waste to energy facilities can overcome the obstacles which have unfortunately plagued this industry. It supports the premise that these facilities can prove to be vital components of an integrated solid waste management program. The lessons learned from the Bridgeport project are especially beneficial to those communities entering into their own solid waste management programs.

The paper reviews the history and failure of the initial RDF facility, designed to generate a powdered fuel for United Illuminating. The inability of the facility to operate at design conditions and the subsequent bankruptcy of Combustion Equipment Associates (CEA) could have led to abandoning waste to energy in the Greater Bridgeport area. The result would have been a monument representing a failure of the emerging waste to energy industry. Instead, through the cooperation of the authority and the participating municipalities, the facility was rebuilt and can now be used to demonstrate the benefits of waste to energy and aid in promotion of the industry.

For the Greater Bridgeport area, 16 years elapsed between the time the commission was established and the final facility reached acceptance. The conception, selection, construction and unsuccessful startup of Bridgeport I required 8 years of effort. After a period of several years, an RFP was issued for the redevelopment of the system, and roughly 5 years later the Signal RESCO facility achieved its acceptance date. These time frames are representative of what is typically required for the waste-to-energy industry. For a community, a great deal of time and effort is required to get from the initial realization of a waste disposal problem through the siting, selection, permitting and construction phase to facility acceptance. The larger projects such as Bridgeport face the added burden of coordinating the efforts of all the participating municipalities and their agencies.

This paper does well in recognizing the "factors, or ingredients, necessary to implementing a successful project." The factors presented all require a great deal of review and effort from all involved in the projects. The authors indicate correctly that in the end this project did pay off for the Greater Bridgeport Area communities.