

Loudon County Solid Waste Disposal Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday, July 17, 2025

Meeting Type: Regular Commission Meeting

Location: Courthouse Annex Building, Loudon, Tennessee

Time: 6:00 p.m. Eastern Time

Chairman: Mr. Adam Waller

Commissioners Attending: Andy Lawson, Steve Bartell, Monty Ross, Adam Waller, Gary Hendrix

Republic representatives: David Hollinshead, Stoddard Pickrell,

Other Attendees: Bonnie Fox, Pat Hunter, Richard Ankland, Brian Viar, Justin Handy, USDA Wildlife Services

Meeting Overview

The Loudon County Solid Waste Disposal Commission convened with Chairman Adam Waller presiding. The meeting began with an announcement that Gary Busch had resigned from the commission, leaving two vacant seats that the county would fill as quickly as possible.

Public Comments and Community Concerns

Ongoing Issues

The meeting opened with public comments addressing several persistent concerns. Community members sought updates on the ongoing "mud issue" and inquired about progress on a broken pipe situation. Chairman Waller acknowledged these concerns and mentioned a scheduled call on July 25th with Republic legal staff to review issues that had been sent by the Commission to them a couple of months ago.

Wildlife Problem Emerges

A significant concern raised by residents involved vultures migrating from Tennessee National development, where trees had been cleared, to neighboring properties. One resident described how the destruction of the vultures' natural roosting area had driven the birds to residential properties, causing problems for homeowners and their pets.

Governance Questions

Public commenters raised questions about dual office holding laws, specifically questioning why some commission members had to resign from other positions while Chairman Waller remained both a county commissioner and solid waste chairman. This led to discussion about a law passed two years ago intended to prevent people from holding multiple paid positions within county government. Chairman Waller will discuss with county attorney.

The Vulture Crisis - A Detailed Solution

USDA Wildlife Services Presentation

Justin Handy from the United States Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services delivered a comprehensive presentation about the black vulture problem at the landfill and neighboring properties. He explained that Wildlife Services operates under USDA and provides wildlife damage management services to various agencies and governments through cooperative service agreements.

The Scale of the Problem

During his inspection, Handy observed over 100 black vultures at the landfill, with many perched on TVA transmission towers crossing the property. He described black vultures as highly intelligent, aggressive birds that behave like "a pack of wolves" - starting with one and quickly multiplying to hundreds.

Damage Assessment

Black vultures cause extensive property damage by:

- Tearing vehicle rubber seals and causing windows to fall out
- Destroying boat equipment at local ramps, causing \$30,000-\$40,000 in damage
- Removing roof shingles and chewing window caulking
- Attacking livestock, particularly cattle during birthing
- Damaging swimming pool liners and other residential property

Migration Patterns and Behavior

Handy explained that black vultures are not native to the United States but have migrated north from South America over the past 20-25 years. Where they were once limited to southern states, they now appear as far north as Michigan. His research with Mississippi State University and TVA revealed that vultures in the area travel between facilities, with the landfill serving as a "pit stop" between Fort Loudoun Dam and Watts Bar Nuclear Plant.

Proposed Solution

Wildlife Services proposed a six-month contract for \$25,000 that would include:

- Three weeks of intensive direct control (15 consecutive days of on-site presence)
- Lethal control using .22 rifles (under federal depredation permits)
- Following weeks with an average of two site visits per week
- Permission forms for adjacent landowners to allow services on their property
- 24/7 access to the landfill as needed

Handy emphasized that harassment techniques alone would not work against an established population, citing failed attempts with noise makers and visual deterrents. He stressed that lethal control was the only effective method for managing black vultures.

Commission Decision

After discussion about liability, effectiveness, and costs, the commission voted unanimously to authorize Chairman Waller to sign a contract with USDA Wildlife Services after review by the commission's attorney, Elizabeth Murphy. Motion by Ms. Ross, Second by Mr. Lawson, Approved.

Engineering and Operations Updates

Cell Construction and Leachate Management

Republic Engineer Stoddard provided updates on ongoing construction projects:

- Module One construction expected completion by August 4th
- Minor modification approval still pending for geological buffer work
- Slip lining project for Module 8 gravity line awaiting approvals
- New 250,000-gallon leachate tank planned for 2026 installation

Storm Water Pond Issues

Two storm water ponds experienced problems due to leachate discharge:

- Pond Two has been plugged for 10 weeks with no discharge, undergoing aeration treatment
- Elevated ammonia levels persist despite other parameters returning to compliance
- Pond Three was completely dewatered and excavation of impacted soils began

Infrastructure Improvements

Several infrastructure projects were underway:

- North slope seeding and matting completed
- Three-phase permanent power installation to east slope to replace generators
- New air compressor system to reduce reliance on electric pumps
- 13-acre capping project designs nearly complete with construction planned for late August/September

Administrative Matters

Personnel Changes

The commission learned of personnel changes affecting oversight:

- Paula Plont replaced Lew Haynes as the new TDEC inspector
- Plont brings 30 years of experience and has previously inspected the facility

Financial Approvals

The commission approved payment for attorney Elizabeth Murphy's fees for February and March, and a \$5,000 refundable retainer for potential co-counsel in anticipated litigation with Republic Services. Motion by Mr. Lawson, Second by Mr. Hendricks. Motion carried.

Borrow Area Development

Plans moved forward for new borrow area development with test pit locations approved and contractors ready to proceed upon commission blessing.

Waste Management Performance

Origin Analysis

Discussion of waste origin reports revealed that 83% of waste came from Loudon County, which commissioners viewed positively as fulfilling their primary mission of serving local citizens. Questions arose about why other counties with their own landfills were bringing waste to Loudon County, which was clarified as being commercial waste management companies rather than county governments directly.

Meeting Conclusion

The meeting concluded with brief discussion of environmental monitoring issues, including black water seepage near the entrance that had been tested and cleared by TDEC. Chairman Waller emphasized the importance of addressing community concerns while maintaining operational efficiency.

Motion to adjourn by Ms. Ross, Second by Mr. Hendricks. Meeting adjourned.

Key Outcomes

1. **Vulture Management:** Approved \$25,000 contract with USDA Wildlife Services for comprehensive black vulture control program
2. **Construction Progress:** Confirmed timeline for critical infrastructure projects including new modules and leachate management systems
3. **Environmental Compliance:** Continued monitoring and remediation of storm water pond issues
4. **Community Engagement:** Addressed citizen concerns about wildlife, infrastructure, and governance questions
5. **Financial Management:** Approved necessary legal and engineering expenses for ongoing operations

The meeting demonstrated the commission's commitment to balancing environmental compliance, community concerns, and operational effectiveness while managing a complex waste disposal operation serving primarily Loudon County citizens but also multiple counties in East Tennessee.

Action Items Table July

Action Item July	Responsible Party	Timeline	Status
Review and sign USDA Wildlife Services contract after attorney review	Chairman Waller	After Elizabeth Murphy review	Pending
Coordinate with adjacent property owners for vulture control permission forms	Bonnie Fox	TBD	Pending
Schedule coordination meeting with Republic (Teresa Fox and David Hollinshead) for USDA access	Chairman Waller	ASAP	Pending
Follow up on minor modification approval for geological buffer work	Stoddard Pickrel	Contact TDEC	Pending
Complete Module One construction	Republic/Stoddard	August 4th target	In Progress
Finalize 13-acre capping project designs	Republic Engineer	By Monday (latest)	In Progress
Install three-phase permanent power to east slope	Republic/Electrician	TBD	In Progress
Complete soil sampling for dewatered pond	Republic/Contractor	10-14 days	In Progress
Obtain pricing for leachate tank re-anchoring	Republic	Within a week	Pending
Proceed with borrow area classification testing	Republic/Stoddard	Upon commission approval	Pending
Research dual office holding law compliance	Chairman Waller/County Attorney Bob Bowman	ASAP	Pending
Schedule landfill tour for new commissioners	Chairman Waller/David/Monty	TBD	Pending
Provide monthly progress report from USDA Wildlife Services	Justin Handy	Mid-September	Future

Minutes respectfully submitted by Monty Ross, LCSWDC Commissioner

Chairman: Adam Waller, Loudon County Solid Waste Disposal Committee

Note: Full video of LCSWDC meeting available at: Loudon County Solid Waste Disposal Commission Meeting, July 17, 2025 (youtube.com)