



Public Hearing – March 7, 2014
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Donald Stein, Chairman of the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority Board of Directors

Regarding SB 27: An Act Concerning Connecticut's Recycling and Materials Management Strategy.

Good afternoon Chairman Meyer, Senator Chapin, Representative Gentile, and Representative Shaban and members of the Environment Committee. My name is Don Stein and I'm the First Selectman of Barkhamsted and the chairman of the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority Board of Directors. I am also the chairman of the newly formed Northwest Hills Council of Government. Of our 21 towns in the northwest corner of the State, 15 towns currently contract with the CRRA.

I first wish to thank you, on behalf of the Authority for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 27. You will receive my full written testimony, but in the interests of time I'll just summarize my remarks.

Connecticut was the first State in the nation to take the lead over 25 years ago to futuristically deal with municipal solid waste. There has been publicity lately about CRRA, but the quasi-public corporation remains one of the most successful in the country in dealing with these important issues.

Our Board of Directors is now composed primarily of First Selectmen or Town Managers from our member towns, most of whom have been on the board for less than two years. One of my goals today is to assure you that we are committed to serving our communities and the State as efficiently and transparently as possible and that the Board's transition to the new Materials Innovation and Recycling Authority (MIRA) organization will take place as seamlessly as possible.

I would also like to assure you that CRRA is financially viable for at least the next 10 years and possesses appropriate internal controls, as confirmed by independent audits and those conducted by DEEP and State auditors. The Board is addressing specific issues of staffing, compensation, use of contractors, bonding, capital expenses, obsolescence, rural services and lower power revenues and other issues necessary to maintain that financial viability.

CRRA believes that the creation by SB 27 of the successor authority to CRRA, the MIRA, is an important first step in moving the State of Connecticut toward the goal of effectively disposing of municipal solid waste in an environmentally conscientious and sustainable manner. The goal of achieving the 60% recycling threshold outlined in SB27 is laudable, but we believe that this initiative should be uniformly applicable to all of the State's cities and towns, as well as private and public entities.

We also believe that relief of CRRA responsibilities for statewide education and additional facets of the State's Solid Waste Management Plan is appropriate, assuming these important tasks are assigned for implementation to others.

The redevelopment of the South Meadows facility through the RFP process proposed in SB 27 is another important component of this desirable initiative. The successor technologies must be both practically and economically feasible, and we urge that the legislature allow CRRA to be a full partner in selecting the next generation system. In this manner, the member municipalities will be assured that the newly selected system will not increase their tip fees beyond the opt-out price levels in their contracts, which are currently tied to economic adjustments, as potentially modified by State mandates.

While waste-to-energy technology is the best currently available option with the smallest environmental impact, we are anxious to partner with DEEP in determining the next solid waste disposal technologies, administering the RFP and redeveloping the South Meadows facility. Such a role would address the concerns of the towns that rely on CRRA/MIRA.

We have prepared suggested statutory language to address these issues and will provide this language to the Committee.

Thank you for your time and your consideration.