

**From:** [COVA Chesapeake Recycles](#)  
**To:** [hello@chesapeakerecycles.com](mailto:hello@chesapeakerecycles.com)  
**Subject:** SPSA Presentation - Points of Clarification for Your Consideration  
**Date:** Friday, March 21, 2025 4:20:59 PM  
**Attachments:** [image002.png](#)  
**Importance:** High

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Dear Mr. Mayor, Members of Council and Staff,

Thank you for inviting SPSA to provide an update on the regional waste management goals.

Sadly, the community did not have the opportunity to participate in the update because neither the video nor the sound were recorded.

Please find below our points of clarification for your consideration:

### **VENDOR SELECTION**

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The [SPSA RFP 01-24](#) issued February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Section 5.0 – Minimum Qualifications, Item #1a, states: Offeror shall own and / or operate a reference facility for an aggregate total of at least three (3) years.

In the SPSA Resolution signed February 26th, 2025, SPSA names Commonwealth Sortation, LLC (a subsidiary of AMP Robotics, now known as AMP One) as the winning bidder. The selection committee cited that Commonwealth has preferred sites and “proven technology.” The Resolution states “Members of the Committee have visited facilities utilizing Commonwealth’s technology in Portsmouth, VA; Denver, CO and Oklahoma City, OK. Commonwealth’s technology is straightforward, robust and compact. The Committee is confident that Commonwealth’s technology is viable and will work.”

**Chesapeake Recycles response:** The facility in Portsmouth, VA has only utilized a portion of the technology for a few months. The [facility in Denver](#) is currently under construction and isn’t scheduled to open until 2026. [Oklahoma City](#) is still using a single-stream, two-bin collection system similar to what we had in Chesapeake and what is currently being used by Virginia Beach and Norfolk. **How did the selection committee come to deem the technology as “proven and viable” when it has not been used at any of the reference facilities for at least three (3) years?**

Also, in a previous presentation given by SPSA, Mayor West asked SPSA Executive Director, Dennis Bagley, if the selection committee would be meeting with government officials in the localities of the sites they planned to visit. Mr. Bagley said they would be meeting with government officials at the reference sites. **Did the selection committee meet with government officials at the reference sites?**

**Why should this matter to you?** Because several cities / counties have been left holding the bag for failed alternative waste disposal (AWD, one-bin collection) systems. Please [visit our website](#) for examples.

### **URGENCY TO RENEW SPSA CONTRACTS**

The current contract doesn't expire until June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2027 yet SPSA is urging the member municipalities to renew their contracts early for a 20 year term and at a higher tipping fee. The current landfill will accommodate waste until 2034, and when cells eight and nine are approved, we will have capacity until 2060.

**Chesapeake Recycles response:** It seems irresponsible to renew the contract early when the technology is still unproven. Why not give more time for the technology to develop? In the meantime, like our sister cities Norfolk and Virginia Beach, we should resume the curbside recycling program to help divert material from the landfill and return recyclables to the manufacturing stream.

## **RECYCLING MANDATE**

- Virginia requires that cities [size recycle 25% of our waste](#). Since Chesapeake cancelled the curbside recycling program, we are only recycling 2.7%, and the region is struggling to make the 25% mandate. In 2021, the [region recycled 35.6%](#). According to SPSA's report to City Council on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the region dropped to 25.8% for 2024.

**Chesapeake Recycles response:** Since Chesapeake cancelled the curbside program, the region struggles to meet the 25% mandate. Although we have a state mandate, there are NO enforcement measures in the code. Chesapeake Recycles / COVA Recycles is working with the Governor's office and members of the General Assembly to get enforcement measures adopted. In the meantime, we are not doing our part. Both Norfolk and Virginia Beach recommitted to their recycling programs.

## **DIVERSION VS RECYCLING**

- In the SPSA presentation, a slide compares the Alternative Waste Disposal (AWD) Diversion Rate of 50% to the current recycling rate of 2.7%.

**Chesapeake Recycles response:** For years we've been working to educate our leaders on the difference between landfill diversion and recycling.

Landfill diversion is where materials are converted into some other form.

In the SPSA proposal, the diverted materials would be converted to biochar using a reactor (biochar is a charcoal-like substance commonly used as a soil or concrete additive).

Recycling is where materials are captured and returned to the manufacturing stream (paper is recycled into paper, plastic is recycled into plastic, etc.).

The recycling process helps to reduce the need for valuable natural resources like petroleum which is used to manufacture plastics, bauxite which is used to manufacture aluminum, and trees which are used to manufacture paper and cardboard.

**To compare the SPSA's projected diversion rate to the city's recycling rate is very misleading to the public.**

## **THE REFERENDUM**

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The referendum failed, and some leaders have said “it failed because the public doesn’t want it.”

The truth is that exit polling showed overwhelming support for the program, but citizens felt they should not have to endure an additional “tax” during one of the worst economies in recent history.

The recycling tax of \$120 / year is equivalent to 28 gallons of milk, or 48 loaves of bread, or 38 gallons of gas, or 3.5 months of insulin medication.

The citizens didn’t vote against recycling. **They voted against an additional tax.**

## **HISTORY**

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For more than three years, we have urged City leaders to reinstate the curbside recycling program using a fraction of the annual [surplus \(\\$161.4 million last year\)](#).

We sponsored a community survey that showed overwhelming support for the program.

More than 13,000 emails were sent to City Council supporting the effort to reinstate the program.

Hundreds of volunteer hours have been contributed to the effort.

Many City Council Members campaigned on reinstating the program, yet nothing has been done.

The SPSA solution is projected for 2029 which we believe is “optimistic at best.”

In the meantime, Chesapeake is only recycling 2.7%.

We urge you to make recycling a priority for the community and vote to reinstate the curbside program at the next City Council meeting.

Respectfully,

Dawn Matheson and Lacy Shirey, Co-Founders  
Chesapeake Recycles  
[ChesapeakeRecycles.com](http://ChesapeakeRecycles.com)  
Reduce. Reuse. Recycle.

