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Athens-Hocking Recycling revamps board, Chmiel resigns

By STEVE ROBB Messenger staff journalist Jan 25, 2017

The Athens County Commissioners will no longer make appointments to the board of Athens-Hocking Recycling Centers Inc., nor will it be required that a member of the commissioners serve on the board.

Those changes, along with an expansion of the board, were included in revised bylaws that were approved Monday by Athens-Hocking Recycling's board. The nonprofit organization runs local recycling programs, including a materials recovery facility near The Plains, and has a garbage collection service.

Although the bylaws no longer require that a seat on the board go to an Athens County commissioner, the new rules don't preclude a commissioner from serving.

Athens County Commissioner Chris Chmiel, a member of the board, voted in favor of the new bylaws on Monday, but then also resigned his position on the board.

Chmiel said he felt it was time to move on, adding that he'd put a lot of effort into development of the materials recovery facility and into separation of the non-profit from the Athens-Hocking Solid Waste District.

Until 2013, the nonprofit's seven-member board consisted of the operations manager of the solid waste district and the six county commissioners from Athens County and Hocking County. Those six also make up the solid waste district board. That year, the nonprofit revised its bylaws (over objections from Hocking County) to change to a three-member board that would include a commissioner from each county, plus an appointee of the Athens County Commissioners. After the Hocking County Commissioners declined to put a commissioner on the board, the bylaws were again revised to allow the Athens County Commissioners to appointment a Hocking County representative, which they did for the first time in 2014.

The separation also included shifting the recycling/garbage collection employees from the solid waste district to Athens County employment, then last year to the nonprofit. Disposition of equipment also had to be worked out between the nonprofit and the solid waste district.

Chmiel said Monday's change in the makeup of the board completed the separation of the nonprofit so that it is a stand-alone organization rather than quasi governmental.

Bruce Underwood, executive director of the nonprofit, said that even though a structural separation has occurred, Athens-Hocking Recycling will continue to work with the solid waste district and Athens County commissioners.

Because the district's solid waste plan called for creation of a materials recovery facility, the district is providing some financial support. Also, the Athens County Commissioners are landlords for the non-profit's facility on Route 13 near Chauncey.

Chmiel, because he served on both boards, has abstained from some votes of the Athens County Commissioners and solid waste district board. That conflict of interests will no longer exist due to his resignation from the nonprofit's board, although Chmiel as a commissioner will continue to serve on the solid waste district board.

The new bylaws also take the nonprofit's board back to seven members. Chmiel's resignation left five positions to fill.

The board appointed: Andy Vogt, owner of Athens Insurance Services; Erin Sykes, of Rural Action; Tim McDermott, a Hocking County Extension educator; Elizabeth Clodfelter, who works at Ohio University; and Joshua Kyae, of Joshua Tree Lawn & Landscape.

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