

## TALKING POINTS FOR HOUSE CLIMATE & ENERGY COMMITTEE

Commissioner Ken Brown  
Thursday, January 21, 2021

- Good morning Chair Long and members of the committee.
- Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the 100% Clean Energy Standard bill. For the record, I'm Ken Brown, a county commissioner in Olmsted County.
- I am testifying today on behalf of the Minnesota Resource Recovery Association, the Association of Minnesota Counties, the Minnesota Resource Recovery Association, and Olmsted County, with concerns that this legislation will impact the long-term viability of resource recovery facilities and interfere with counties' state-mandated responsibilities to manage solid waste.
- The resource recovery facility in Olmsted County is very important to our county and region. While renewable energy production is an added benefit of the facility – its main purpose is to manage waste in a safe and environmentally-focused way. Waste management is a core state-mandated county responsibility, and this focus makes waste-to-energy facilities unique from other energy generating facilities.
- In addition to solid waste responsibilities – the county is also charged with protecting the health of its residents. We hold both of these responsibilities to the highest standards.
- In the early 80s, Olmsted County had a landfill listed as a Superfund cleanup site. There was a growing concern that a drinking water aquifer could become contaminated because of the local Karst terrain that make our groundwater susceptible to pollution.
- Since then, the county made a concerted effort to manage solid waste above ground rather than below it.
- Waste-to-energy is a proven technology used globally and across Minnesota to generate clean, renewable energy from the sustainable management of municipal solid waste.
- Benefits of the Olmsted County Waste-to-Energy Facility include:
  - Waste is handled in accordance with the Minnesota Solid Waste Management Hierarchy – to make the most of valuable use of resources. The county's solid waste management system meets the state's Waste Management Act emphasizing the upper end of the hierarchy by promoting waste reduction, utilization of the reuse/rental/repair industries, recycling, recovering organic material, and resource recovery to minimize land disposal.

- 90% of waste not recycled is kept out of the landfill by using it to produce steam and electricity at the Olmsted Waste-to-Energy Facility (OWEF).
  - 34 million KWHs of electricity are generated annually reducing dependency on fossil fuels.
  - Over 2.4 million tons of garbage have been kept out of a landfill by processing it at the OWEF since 1987.
  - Without waste to energy, Olmsted County would have filled up three additional landfills the size of the Kalmar Landfill site since 1987.
  - No property tax dollars are used. The system is paid for through user fees, energy sales, and the sale of recyclable materials. If we are not able to sell the energy, user fees will likely have to increase.
  - Waste is processed close to where it is produced, minimizing transportation and associated truck emissions.
  - Fewer greenhouse gas emissions than landfills.
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- The OWEF is a critical component of the county's Integrated Solid Waste Management System. This system also includes a recycling center, hazardous waste facility, yard waste composting site, all of which work to divert about 120,000 tons annually of waste from our landfill.
  
  - In Olmsted County, we take pollution control very seriously. The OWEF is equipped with the most modern air pollution control technology available to ensure emissions are safe for human health and the environment. The Olmsted County plant has robust pollution control and capture technology and is compliant with all state and federal air emission standards.
  
  - Despite waste reduction efforts, more than one million pounds of waste is produced each day in our County.
  
  - Zero waste is the ultimate goal, but until we reach that goal, resource recovery facilities must be a viable option to provide an effective, efficient, and environmentally focused waste management system for all residents.
  
  - Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I am happy to answer any questions.