

What and Why is VPPSA

In order to start the conversation, an introduction is in order. Most people see VPPSA and believe us to be a private company that is charging for services that could be duplicated elsewhere. We are a regional authority, so that means that over 30 years ago the communities in the region realized that there were issues forthcoming that required collaborative efforts. We must give the state some credit for taking a regional approach. They felt that some of the smaller communities could benefit from working together, providing a service to their residents that might be too expensive to provide on their own.

Thirty plus years ago, subtitle D mandated that all unlined landfills receive upgrading to new standards and introduced the requirement that those upgraded landfills be monitored for 30 years after the closure. Not 30 years after the last piece of trash was buried; 30 years after the landfills met closure requirements. (The previous requirement was 10 years. Many of the landfills that closed to meet the new regulations have closed within the last couple of years or are just now reaching closure.)

In addition to that upcoming concern, landfill disposal rates were projected to rise considerably. To combat the issue of landfill space resulting from the closure of many smaller municipal landfills, the state introduced the statewide recycling rate that was to start low and increase over time to reduce the amount of waste that went to the landfills.

Regional cooperation was born. It was not an easy task. We had to figure out what we wanted those authorities to do and what services we should have them perform. Then the all-important: how do we fund this today and tomorrow? VPPSA originally sought the assistance of the private sector to provide services. We could not find anyone to service all our Middle Peninsula communities, and the cost to hire multiple providers made it cost prohibitive. The communities agreed that VPPSA should provide those services: buy trucks, compactors, and build and manage the sites. Where we could hire the private sector, we did. In addition to the services provided on the Middle Peninsula, the regional group was looking for ways to meet recycling goals on the Peninsula. Curbside recycling and a regional composting facility concept were born.

Today, VPPSA provides a variety of services to the ten-member communities. The communities decide what services they want and provide funding for them. Over time, the services have increased to meet the needs of our changing environment and the needs of our residents. VPPSA is an extension of each community. VPPSA has a ten-member Board that consists of a member from each of the communities that formed VPPSA. This Board provides direction and oversight and VPPSA in turn provides the services that each community wants to offer their citizens.

Part of the regional footprint is future planning. We are required to provide solid waste management planning going out 20 years, with updates every five years to the state. It is also our job to deal with the here and now issues. Over the years we have developed a number of recycling plans: we have seen some change, we have seen them grow, we have

seen commodity markets change dramatically and we reacted accordingly. It has been asked, is VPPSA paid per ton or flat fee? It is much more complicated than that. The communities are VPPSA. They have invested in the future of the Authority by providing trucks, equipment, manpower, prepositioned contracts for emergency debris removal, household chemical collections, tire recycling, scrap metal recycling, cardboard recycling, mixed paper recycling, oil and antifreeze collection, a composting operation, curbside recycling, and funding mechanisms to continue them going forward, to mention a few. VPPSA is a regional solid waste authority, providing solid waste management planning and services to the member communities.

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