

To: Ulster County Community Members and Legislators  
From: Legislator Chris Hewitt, Chair, Energy, Environment & Sustainability Committee  
Re: Zero Waste Policy Guidance Work with MSW Consultants

Colleagues and neighbors,

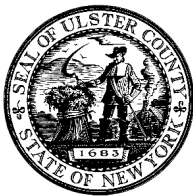
I'm writing to share an update on Ulster County's current zero waste work and to clarify the role of the consultant we've engaged, MSW Consultants, under the recent \$10,000 contract.

MSW Consultants was hired to create a Zero Waste Policy Guidance document, prepared by June for our review. Its purpose is not to serve as a full Zero Waste Implementation Plan (ZWIP) on its own, but to give the Legislature, UCRRA, and the Department of the Environment clear, concise guidance about our best next steps for policy, planning, and investment.

**What this guidance document will do:**

- Summarize baseline solid waste conditions in Ulster County—who we serve, what we generate, and how materials are currently managed, disposed, and diverted.
- Describe our solid waste market—the financial and infrastructure systems (collection, transport, processing, pricing, tip fees, flow control, etc.) that shape what's possible and where barriers exist.
- Map our current policy framework—how County, State, and UCRRA policies interact today, and where there are gaps in effectiveness, funding, staffing, and enforcement.
- Recommend strategic actions to advance zero waste policy, organized into key focus areas:
  - Governance & management capacity (clarifying the roles of the Legislature and UCRRA, and identifying structural barriers).
  - Market and system conditions (how our current systems promote or limit zero waste policy).
  - Operations, assets, and service capacity (what infrastructure and service gaps exist).
  - Education and engagement (how internal capacity and public outreach can better support zero waste policy).

In other words, this is a strategic policy guide, not the full ZWIP itself. It is designed to help us, as policymakers, understand where we stand, what is working, what is missing, and what sequence of actions will best position Ulster County to succeed as we move into the next phase of solid waste planning.



## **How this fits with UCRRA's role and the upcoming Solid Waste Management Plan**

By law and practice, UCRRA's role is implementation—operating facilities, contracts, and programs—while the Legislature is responsible for setting policy direction, adopting budgets, and making recommendations that shape that implementation. UCRRA will be undertaking an update to the County's Solid Waste Management Plan starting next year; that is where the full Zero Waste Implementation Plan will properly live and be operationalized.

The goal of this \$10,000 guidance project is to ensure that, when that Solid Waste Management Plan process begins, Ulster County:

- Has a clear, shared understanding of our baseline conditions and market realities.
- Has identified policy tools, priorities, and constraints in advance.
- Has clarified the respective roles of the Legislature, UCRRA, the Department of the Environment, and key stakeholders in advancing zero waste.
- Has a practical, phased framework for future zero waste policy development, funding strategies, and program design.

This allows the Legislature to do our job: craft policy, recommendations, and budget items that are grounded in real data and system conditions, so that UCRRA's updated Solid Waste Management Plan can incorporate a realistic, effective Zero Waste Implementation Plan.

## **Why this focused study and funding level**

Because the consultant's scope is strategic guidance—not full program design or system build-out—the \$10,000 contract is intentionally focused on:

- Reviewing and acknowledging past County, UCRRA, and stakeholder work on zero waste.
- Providing a succinct, policy-relevant picture of our current system and its constraints.
- Identifying where governance, markets, infrastructure, funding, and education need to evolve to support a serious zero waste agenda.

This is a first step, meant to guide all interested parties—Legislature, UCRRA, County departments, municipalities, and community partners—toward the most effective next actions, rather than attempting to “do everything” in one under-resourced planning effort.

## **Next steps and engagement**

As Chair of the Energy, Environment & Sustainability Committee, my intent is to:

- Work with MSW Consultants, UCRRA, and County staff to refine this guidance document based on local input and data.



- Bring the final guidance back to the Legislature and the public so we can use it to shape our policy, budget, and oversight work in advance of UCRRA's Solid Waste Management Plan update.
- Continue to meet with community stakeholders to ensure that local models, like innovative transfer station practices and reuse/organics programs, are lifted up as we plan for the future.

I appreciate the passion and expertise so many of you bring to zero waste work. This guidance project is meant to honor that work by giving us a clear, shared map of where we are and how we can most effectively move forward together.

In solidarity,

Chris Hewitt  
Ulster County Legislator  
Chair, Energy, Environment & Sustainability Committee