From: Bigbilicutler@aol.com [mailto:Bigbilicutler@aol.com]
Sent: Monday, October 15, 2012 10:21 PM
To: Bobel, Phil
Subject: Re: Public Meeting on 10/17/12: RFP Issues and Performance Specifications

As I will not be able to attend the meeting on Oct. 17 I want to submit some comments on three overall issues to you via this message.

SATISFYING THE OPPOSITION (or at least neutralizing them)
The opponents to the Energy/Compost Facility object primarily on grounds that park lands are sacrosanct and can never be used for any other purpose. They will never give in on that issue. However, the great majority of voters in Palo Alto, I believe, see that position as absurd, so it poses no problem.

However, opposition can reasonably be justified on grounds that odor, noise, poor aesthetics and heavy truck traffic are objectionable near Bixby Park. I find that odor, noise and aesthetics have been addressed in the Draft RFP. As I indicate below, in the final RFP, quantitative limits on those parameters must be specified, at levels that the majority of voters would consider reasonable.

I find no mention of truck traffic to/from the facility in the Draft RFP. That should be addressed and reasonable limits specified.

MISSION AND MISSION FUNCTIONS
In the Draft RFP I see a long list of issues and preferred positions that address all aspects of the Energy/Compost Facility, but nothing stating its Mission or the Mission Functions that it must perform (independent of whatever final form the Facility may take) in order to perform its Mission. These are the fundamental statement of the Problem for which the Facility is the Solution. This information should be provided front and center in the RFP. Everything that follows, addressing all the issues, is to define the scope of the requirements and constraints that quantify acceptable performance of the Mission and the Mission Functions.

A Mission Statement might be like the following.

"Accept all compostable material from (area serviced) and convert that material into useful product with a minimum of residual non-useful waste and with acceptable environmental impact on the immediate surroundings, the adjacent communities and the world at large."

Follow this up with a list of the top-level Mission Functions which, in aggregate, must be performed in order to accomplish the Mission, regardless of whatever form the Facility may take.

QUANTIFICATION OF REQUIREMENTS
My experience as a contractor on NASA and military projects with a large local aerospace firm has taught me that iron-clad quantitative requirements must be established for every parameter of the deliverable product. Otherwise costly and time-wasting disputes will arise, and/or the customer will be forced to accept a product that falls short of need. What I see in the Draft RFP is a lot of qualitative descriptions of positions taken by the City on the issues identified, but very little quantification. Where a parameter can be expressed numerically, a numerical value representing the threshold of acceptability for the final product must be specified. Where a parameter does not lend itself to numerical quantification, such as aesthetics, a qualitative measure must be devised, such as a range of comparison examples that represent acceptability. It helps, with a general characteristic like aesthetics, to break it down into more specific attributes such as volume, height, distribution of masses, color, surface texture, etc., as well as overall harmony of the design within itself and relative to its surroundings. An architect might be of help in devising such a scheme for evaluating aesthetics. The same general idea applies to other qualitative characteristics.