

Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 28, 2021, 7:00-8:45 pm
Zoom Online Conference

Members in attendance: Steve Ferrey (from 7:45 pm), Sunwoo Kahng, John Lewis (from 8:05 pm), Meryl Kessler, Robin Maltz, Seth Parker, Marian Rambelle (Chair), Karen Slote, Miles Smith, Carl Valente

Members absent: None

Others in attendance: Waneta Trabert (Director, DPW Sustainable Materials Management Division (SMMD))

Approval of December 17, 2020 Meeting Minutes:

Approval of minutes postponed until February 25 meeting to allow members time to review.

Sustainable Materials Management Division (SMMD) Update:

Public Comments: None

Hauler Operations: Hauler operations continue to run smoothly since the new contract with Waste Management (WM) went into effect on July 1.

COVID-19 State of Emergency Impacts: WT is decreasing her hours as she transitions out of the City's Grab 'n Go meals program coordinator role, but the Department of Health and Human Services has requested her help in coordinating vaccination logistics (initially 5 hrs. per week). No impact to SMMD operations (with concurrent reduction in some SMMD operations during COVID-19, such as enforcement).

Resource Recovery Center (RRC)/Swap Shop/Book Shed (Rumford Ave facility): RRC continues on an appointment-only basis (no timeline for ending). Appointments have slowed after the holidays. It is not known when/if Goodwill will return to accept donations at RRC. Goodwill has a lease for the space and opts to not come back yet. The company expressed concerns that it was difficult to provide adequate COVID-19 safety procedures for their employees. WT will inquire.

Grant Programs Update: With the City facing a deficit with WM's fees due to increased trash and yard waste collected in 2020 (70% yard waste increase this year), \$175k in the city's Recycling Dividend Grant Funds will be allocated to covering those excess costs. There have been no fees due to recycling contamination since the last WM recycling audit (in 2019). The new WM contract includes 6 pages on contamination and audits, and requires 60 days' notice to the city of recycling contamination audits by WM.

2021 Technical Assistance Grant (TAG): A kickoff meeting is scheduled for 2/19 with Julia Green (MassDEP Municipal Assistance Coordinator), Waneta Trabert, Jim McGonagle, Shawna Sullivan, and Jonathan Yeo. It will be an administrative kickoff meeting and WT felt it would not serve a purpose for a member of SMMC to be represented at the meeting. SMMD receives 80 hours of consulting assistance from MassDEP to analyze the City's existing curbside collection program and other municipal programs in MA and around the country. SMMC subcommittees' work will be further analyzed in the TAG review. WT clarified that the TAG project will not be an evaluation based solely on cost savings. The TAG final report will be

due in February 2022, so subcommittee reports for the TAG report should be completed about summer of 2021.

Curbside Compliance: No change - no enforcement for now.

Organics Dropoff Program: WT reported that two 35-gallon carts of organics are filled and collected twice a week from RRC. She feels this program does not compete with the Black Earth curbside subscription service. The next step is to expand the collection sites to 3 locations around the city, possibly using Big Belly bins for 24-hour collection.

MassDEP Draft 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan (SWMP) update:

MassDEP is MassDEP's January Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) meeting was canceled; next meeting is scheduled for April 22, to discuss the SWMP. MassDEP is considering changes to site assignment regulations, primarily regarding transfer stations. MR asked if RRC qualifies as a transfer station and, therefore, might be affected. WT will look into the status of RRC (the facility has a post-closure of landfill permit from MassDEP).

RRC Attendant Hiring Process:

WT reported that current union contract rules do not allow for a citizen representative to participate in the interview panel during the hiring process for the Attendant position, as proposed at the last meeting. Discussion regarding the job description for the position should include customer service language as the position has included serving as a recycling/reuse information resource for residents. WT noted it is very difficult to change the job description because it is negotiated with the union. Understanding the above, the Commission voted unanimously to send the letter request to DPW Commissioner McGonagle previously drafted by MR and MS, with modifications to be made by MS and MR. It was decided by unanimous roll call vote (MK moved, KS seconded) that MS will include (and MR will review/revise) in the letter the SMMC interest in revising the Attendant job description in the future to include interest and knowledge of recycling/waste management, and good communication skills with residents. MR will distribute a final version to members.

Election Procedural Changes to By-laws for virtual meetings:

Prior to election voting and as recommended by the City's Legal Dept., the Commission agreed unanimously (MS moved, SP seconded) to change the By-laws for this election only: to conduct the balloting by roll call instead of paper ballots because the meeting was being held virtually.

Election of Officers:

Robin Maltz and Seth Parker, Election Coordinators, presided over the election and conducted the roll call balloting.

Chair - Sunwoo Kahng was voted in unanimously by roll call vote.

Vice Chair - Marian Rambelle was voted in unanimously by roll call vote.

Secretary - Carl Valente was voted in unanimously by roll call vote.

SMMC Subcommittees:

Subcommittee 1 - Future Trash/Recycling Needs (MK, RM, JL) – No report; next meeting on 2/17.

Subcommittee 2 - Trash/Recycling Disposal Capacity (CV, MS, SF) – Met with Julia Green (MassDEP Municipal Assistance Coordinator for Newton's TAG) and Jonathan Yeo (Newton's Chief Operating Officer (COO)) on 1/22:

- Subcommittee is looking at 2025 disposal capacity, when DEP projects a great decrease in MA landfill capacity
- DEP anticipates no reduction in waste-to-energy (ETE) facilities' capacity at through 2030
- Transportation of waste by rail to out of state facilities is the trend—no cost data yet available from DEP (also, MA exports of Construction & Demolition (C&D) waste to Ohio has been decreasing, but increasing to NY and other states)
- Whether DEP will require sealed rail cars for the ash (and added cost) is not currently in the regulations, but JG expects it to be addressed during the permitting process
- 44% Massachusetts solid waste tonnage goes to the 7 in-state WTE renewable energy facilities (which are running at capacity); the smallest of those will close (in western MA)
- Local concerns near WTE facilities: air emissions, and increased truck traffic (20-30%), also in neighboring towns
- For waste tipping contracts Beyond 2025 - Julia was not aware of any data
- Newton's trash goes to the Millbury WTE facility, and the ash goes to the Shrewsbury landfill.

Subcommittee 3 - Trash/Recycling Strategies in Other Municipalities — Conducting independent research, focusing on composting and user-based pricing incentives and CA municipalities recommended to be researched by WT. Next meeting is on 2/3.

2020 Annual Report with 2021 SMMC Goals:

Each subcommittee will write a summary of their 2020 activities and 2021 goals to incorporate into the 2020 Annual Report. Also expect to include a couple of short-term goals for 2021, such as shifting away from black plastic containers usage by restaurants, etc. since they cannot be currently recycled.

Public Comments/Other Announcements: None

Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 pm.

Next meeting - Thursday, February 25, 2021, 7:00-8:45 pm, Zoom Online Conference