

Newton Solid Waste Commission Meeting Minutes
Thursday, July 23, 2020, 7:00-8:45 pm
Zoom Online Conference

Members in attendance: Steve Ferrey, Sunwoo Kahng, Meryl Kessler, John Lewis, Robin Maltz, Seth Parker, Marian Rambelle (Chair), Karen Slote, Miles Smith, Carl Valente (from approximately 7:30 pm)

Members absent: Brita Lundberg

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

Approval of June 25, 2020 Meeting Minutes:

Vote taken to approve the meeting minutes and passed by all members present.

SWC By-laws/Ordinance Update:

The Docket Request for the proposed ordinance change (submitted to the City Clerk's office on February 10) was referred by the City Council to the Public Facilities Committee for consideration in March (clarified by the City Clerk's office after the 6/25/2020 meeting). The City Clerk's Office will request a status update from the Public Facilities Committee regarding scheduling of the item for a committee meeting. If the Public Facilities Committee votes to recommend the ordinance change for approval, it will then be sent to the full City Council to vote on its adoption.

The approved SWC By-laws are dependent on several proposed changes in the ordinance, so the By-laws will become effective after the City Council adopts the ordinance change.

MassDEP's Draft 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan discussion/re-opened public comment period:

MassDEP re-opened the public comment period for the Draft 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan, based on input received during its initial fall 2019 public comment period, as well as other developments, and will accept additional public comment through September 15, 2020. MassDEP stated that the re-opened public comment period will focus specifically, but not exclusively, on issues of environmental justice, climate change, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as they relate to solid waste management in Massachusetts.

Discussion of the feasibility of preparing comments, contents and timing needed for review and approval by the Mayor's office for MassDEP's 9/15/2020 deadline. SWC will provide input for comments that WT will prepare on behalf of the city. WT will prepare draft comments, including issues discussed in past SWC meetings, as well as any comments that meeting attendees wish to send her within approximately the next week. Anticipated topics for the city's comments include: creation of a statewide mandate for recycling (residential and commercial) rather than the current MA waste bans on disposal of recyclables; increased enforcement of MA waste bans; sharing of MassDEP's recycling data with the state legislature (similar to CT and NY); and exploring proposed statewide Extended Producer Liability (EPR) legislation.

WT plans to send the draft comments to the Mayor's office by mid-August for review. WT plans to provide the comments for discussion at the next SWC meeting, prior to submittal to MassDEP. Due to this anticipated timing, the next SWC meeting was changed from August 27 to September 3, 2020.

2020 SWC goals discussion:

WT plans to apply for a MassDEP Technical Assistance Grant in August, pending the mayor's approval, to request MassDEP data coordinator assistance (80 hours) to conduct a year-long study to explore various options on variable rate waste plans, other systems that are in place in comparable municipalities around the country, and potential options for Newton. The study will conclude with a recommendations report.

Discussion of draft 2020 SWC goals, prepared based on discussions in the last meeting. Several specific proposed goals regarding Bulky Waste, City Government Recycling, and Private Hauler Recycling were discussed. They were dropped from the 2020 SWC goals due to:

- Concerns expressed about higher priorities and budget issues in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, relative to the bulky waste and city government recycling topics.
- Concerns expressed about the potential burden of additional expense to businesses and a lack of political interest during the current economic and social environment to pass private hauler recycling legislation that potentially adds expense to businesses. JL also plans to gauge the Newton-Needham Chamber business community's current feeling on this topic.

Two proposed long-range comprehensive goals were retained, which cover in general:

1) Long-Term Goals for the City - initiate the process of proposing sustainable long-term (5-yr and 30-yr) goals for the City, for use in the SMMD's upcoming 5-Year Sustainable Materials Management Strategy (expected end of 2020), and to help prepare for the City's next hauling contract (2025) and incineration contract (2027).

2) Implement Goals - implement trash reduction and other goals through ordinance/policy changes and education/outreach to residents and businesses.

The Chair will make edits to the goals and objectives/methods, as discussed, and prepare a final document.

Per last meeting's discussion regarding procedure, the Chair inquired with M. Lawlor (Legal Department) regarding the ability to share the draft 2020 SWC goals document among members for editing on Google Docs prior to a meeting, for increased efficiency during the meeting discussion. M. Lawlor checked the applicability of MA Open Meeting Law and replied that a document cannot be shared among members for editing outside of a meeting.

New Hauler Contract Startup:

The new hauler contract with Waste Management became effective on July 1; no issues were noted.

Sustainable Materials Management Division (SMMD) Update (abbreviated due to time):

Public Comments: None noted.

COVID-19 State of Emergency Impacts: The state recently announced its rescinding of the Covid-19-related ban on the use of reusable bags at retail stores. The city will provide a grace period until September 1 to reinstate the city's plastic bag ban ordinance.

Resource Recovery Center (RRC)/Swap Shop/Book Shed Reopening: The RRC reopening on June 2 (on an appointment-only basis) continues to proceed smoothly, including an appointment-based Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) event held in early July. Future HHW events are scheduled on 8/13 and 9/17. The Swap Shop's re-opening safety protocol was approved by the city's health department and it plans to re-open on August 7 under the approved conditions.

Bulky Waste Program: No update.

Curbside Compliance: Curbside compliance program continues to be on hold through the summer during the Covid-19 State of Emergency.

Organics Dropoff Program: No update regarding the planned opening of a new organics (food waste) drop-off program at RRC.

Public Comments/Other Announcements: Holiday period conflicts with the scheduled November and December meeting dates were discussed; the meeting dates are rescheduled to 11/19/2020 and 12/17/2020.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 9 pm.

Next meeting - Thursday, September 3, 2020, 7:00-8:45 pm, Zoom Online Conference