

2023 Annual Report

City of Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission

Newton, Massachusetts

The Sustainable Materials Management Commission (SMMC) is made up of residents appointed to advise the Mayor and the City Council on all aspects of municipal solid waste collection and disposal and to monitor and make recommendations regarding the City's activities in these areas. The SMMC works closely with the City of Newton's Sustainable Materials Management Division (SMMD), headed by Director Waneta Trabert.

In 2023, the SMMC included the following members: Steve Ferrey, Alan Gordon, Sunwoo Kahng (Chair), Meryl Kessler (Vice Chair), John Lewis, Robin Maltz, Vince McKay, Marian Rambelle, Karen Slote, Miles Smith, and Carl Valente (Secretary). The SMMC meets online monthly through the year, typically on the 4th Thursday at 7pm.

During the course of the year, and in line with its 2023 goals, the SMMC prioritized work in the following areas:

- Support for a Private Hauler Ordinance introduced by Councilor Alison Leary requiring private haulers serving Newton establishments to automatically supply full recycling services in addition to trash collection (Ordinance passed in March 2023.)
- Support for the Expanded Sustainable Packaging Ordinance that would prohibit the use of takeout containers that are not reusable, compostable, or recyclable; SMMC members Alan Gordon and Sunwoo Kahng worked with Councilor Vicki Danberg and others on the Plastics Reduction Working Group to draft the ordinance. (Ordinance passed in September 2023.)
- Survey of Newton multi-unit building waste and recycling service conducted by SMMC member Karen Slote in April 2023.
- Preliminary research and discussion of a strengthened "Buy Recycled" policy for the City where purchasing of products with recycled content would be a priority for city departments.
- Work by SMMC member Alan Gordon and Councilor Andreae Downes on a City Council resolution with that would discourage the purchase of products containing PFAS by city departments. (Resolution to go to City Council in January 2024.)
- Research into smaller residential cart sizes and pricing strategies in other Massachusetts communities as potential models for Newton presented by SMMC members Carl Valente and Vince McKay.
- Research into the waste and toxic implications of artificial turf by member Karen Slote and presentation to members. Based on concerns about recyclability and

toxicity, SMMC sent letters to the Mayor and City Council in opposition to replacement of artificial turf fields at Newton South and Newton North High Schools and a new installation at Albemarle.

- Review of the Sustainable Material Management Division’s October 2023 report Recommendations to Rethink Curbside Collection Services, and discussions of priorities for the upcoming waste hauling contract. These priorities were relayed to the Mayor on November 16, 2023.
- Research into additional ways to increase diversion of organics from the trash including barriers to subscription and novel collection methods.

REVIEW OF SMMC GOALS FOR 2023

(from the 2022 Annual Report)

1. Continue to work toward achieving recommendations set out in the SMMC report. Propose trash reduction options and other goals through education/outreach to Mayor, City Council, residents, and businesses.

3 of 6 recommendations adopted to date: City Council resolution to adopt recommended waste reduction goals, funding for comprehensive zero waste plan, and more staffing resources for the SMMD.

2. Explore in greater detail how the City might practically implement the SMMC recommendations as we draw closer to 2025 waste hauler and disposal contract renewal. Topics might include:
 - a. City-wide curbside organics collection
 - b. Cart size reduction

The SMMD’s report Recommendations to Rethink Curbside Collection Services includes a number of options for increasing residential organics diversion, and the latest waste hauling RFP includes a call for pricing on composting services. Variable cart sizing and pricing remains a possibility.

3. Create greater collaboration between SMMC, Recycling Committee, and various community groups to amplify education and initiatives.

Ongoing

4. Evaluate the recommendations of the SMMD report Recommendations to Rethink Curbside Collection Services when it is finalized and becomes public in the Spring of 2023.

Complete

5. Explore expanding the SMMC’s advisory capacity to other City departments, in addition to the Department of Public Works.

Ongoing

6. Propose trash reduction options and recycled content goals in the City’s procurement and purchasing decisions through revision of the Buy Recycled Policy. Investigate methods to encourage compliance.

Ongoing

7. Encourage the City to join the Government Recycling Demand Champion Program.

Ongoing

8. Explore methods to reduce construction and demolition waste, deconstruction policies, and incorporation of reuse and recycled content into construction.

Have held preliminary discussions with Green Newton’s Building Standards Committee and with Josh Morse.

9. Work with Newton Public Schools to adopt stronger sustainability policy on reducing, reusing, recycling, and composting.

Ongoing

10. Facilitate Waste Reduction and Diversion

- a. Continue promoting Black Earth program based on results of 2022 survey.

Ongoing

- b. Support passage of the proposed Expanded Sustainable Packaging Ordinance. *Complete*

- c. Support passage of the proposed Private Hauler Ordinance. *Complete*

2024 SMMC GOALS

1. Continue to work toward achieving recommendations set out in the SMMC report. Propose trash reduction options and other goals through education/outreach to Mayor, City Council, residents, and businesses.
2. Explore methods to reduce construction and demolition waste, deconstruction policies, and incorporation of reuse and recycled content into construction.
3. Advise SMMD in the waste hauling RFP evaluation and contract renewal process.
4. Continue to advise Mayor and City Council on the waste and toxic implications of artificial turf.
5. Propose trash reduction options and recycled content goals in the City's procurement and purchasing decisions through revision of the Buy Recycled Policy. Investigate methods to encourage compliance such as encouraging the City to join the Government Recycling Demand Champion Program.
6. Support Newton Public Schools in their efforts to adopt stronger sustainability policy on reducing, reusing, recycling, and composting.
7. Continue promoting composting in the city through Black Earth program and other initiatives.

Respectfully submitted,



Sunwoo Kahng
Chair, Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission
March 28, 2023