

**Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission (SMMC)**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, April 25, 2024, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Remote Meeting via Zoom**

**Members in Attendance:** Marian Rambelle, Acting Chair, Carl Valente, Secretary, Steve Ferrey (at 7:55 p.m.), Alan Gordon, Karen Slote, Robin Maltz and Vince McKay.

**Members Absent:** Sunwoo Kahng, Meryl Kessler, Miles Smith and Jim McGonagle, Commissioner, DPW, Ex-Officio.

**Other Participants:** Alison Leary, City Council, Julia Malakie, City Council, Waneta Trabert, Director, DPW Sustainable Materials Management Division (SMMD), Shara Ertel and Kirsti Pecci, Executive Director, Just Zero.

**Approval of March 28, 2024 Meeting Minutes:**

On the motion by Ms. Slote, seconded by Mr. McKay, the Meeting Minutes of March 28 were approved, 6-0 on a roll call vote. Mr. Gordon, Ms. Maltz, Ms. Slote, Mr. Valente, Mr. McKay, and Ms. Rambelle voting yes.

**Discussion on the State of Composting in MA and Solutions, Kirsti Pecci, Executive Director, Just Zero:**

In her role as the Executive Director of Just Zero, a national non-profit organization based in the Boston area, Ms. Pecci is a strong advocate for reducing solid waste, recycling, and reuse of recycled materials. She noted that:

- Composting is an excellent tool for reducing the volume of solid waste.
- Black Earth and other composters are increasing capacity.
- Another option: Backyard “green cones” work using heat enzymes that dissolve meat and organic waste into the ground and do not create compost. They need at least five hours of sun per day to operate and cost approximately \$250 retail.
- It is estimated that 30 percent of the solid waste at the Wheelabrator-Millbury incinerator is made up of food waste.
- Just Zero does not support mixing food waste with sewage sludge because the sludge includes industrial waste and toxic landfill leachate. These materials include numerous chemicals that are not treated as part of the treatment process. Of particular concern is the presence of PFAS and PFOA chemicals, which were originally commercially developed to withstand high heat, that exist in high concentrations in landfill leachate. Just Zero believes that sewage treatment plants may be open to significant liability in disposing of sewage sludge that includes PFAS and PFOA chemicals.
- Other methods to reduce trash volume include pay-as-you-throw pricing systems, food waste composting, and the addition of more types of bottles and containers covered by, as well as increased, deposit fees, as part of the State’s existing bottle redemption laws.

**Update on Waste Hauling RFP:**

Ms. Trabert updated the SMMC on the status of the waste collection RFP, which was issued jointly with the Town of Brookline. She noted that:

- Six proposals were received in response to the RFP;
- Three of the proposals she would consider to be comprehensive in terms of the services bid on (which include curbside collection);
- Two of the proposals included only limited services, which included food waste;
- One proposal included four services, but excluded curbside collection; and
- The price proposals are good for 90 days.

**SMMD Update:**

The SMMD update, dated April 19, 2024, was reviewed. Ms. Trabert also commented that:

- In response to a question, it was reiterated that the enforcement by the Health and Human Services Dept. of the one-year old private hauler ordinance will be ‘complaint driven’ rather than by proactive enforcement.
- In response to a question, it was reiterated that the long-term plan being developed by an outside consultant for the City will not include much on residential curbside collection options since that topic was studied in-depth in the SMMC’s “Setting the Path to Zero Waste: *Recommendations on the Future of Residential Curbside Waste Management in Newton*” report (11/2/2021).
- There are now 325 registered users for the organic waste drop-off pilot program. Black Earth picks up the waste 2x/week.

Meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting of the SMMC will be Thursday, May 23, 2024, scheduled to be via Zoom.

***Documents Provided/Discussed at Meeting:***

1. *March 28, 2024 Meeting Minutes.*
2. *April 2024 SMMD Update, dated April 19, 2024.*