

Newton Solid Waste Commission Meeting Minutes - REVISED 9/3/2020
Thursday, June 25, 2020, 7:00-8:45 pm
Zoom Online Conference

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

Members absent: Brita Lundberg

Others in attendance: Waneta Trabert (Director, DPW Sustainable Materials Management Division (SMMD)), Alison Leary (City Councilor), Marcia Cooper, Harry Sanders

Approval of May 28, 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 ordinance change (submitted to the City Clerk's office on February 10) has not yet been sent by the City Clerk's office to the City Council. Councilor Leary noted there have been delays in bringing items to the City Council since March due to time devoted to Covid-19 State of Emergency-related and budget items.

Sustainable Materials Management (SMM) Division Update:

Public Comments: One complaint received in June - the cart repair team (contractor) had repaired a resident trash cart curbside in May, and then returned in June on a non-collection day and entered private property to replace the repaired cart at the top of the driveway. Customer service offered that the repair team may have considered the repair a temporary fix (as a small piece was not fully in place after repair). WT has not heard of the cart repair team entering private property and will remind them not to do so. She noted the contractor cart repair contract ends as of June 30 and Waste Management (WM) will take over cart repair operations when the new hauling contract takes effect on July 1.

COVID-19 State of Emergency Impacts: WT will remain co-coordinator for the City's food insecurity program through the end of summer, now at approximately 5 hrs/week. This role is not a significant impact on SMMD operations since, for example, there is less project planning work during the state of emergency. SMMD's Waste Coordinator is still working remotely and has assumed more administrative duties since the loss of the part-time position. The FY21 DPW budget increase of \$800K reflects increased costs associated with the new hauling contract (eff. 7/1/2020).

Bulky Waste Program: From June 1-25: 352 bulky waste pickup requests, far fewer than the 1,531 requests in June 2019 and the 3,159 requests in June 2018. There continues to be some illegal dumping but less than last month, and SMMD is working on tracking incidents (some via 311 calls). Working on locking school dumpsters overnight, and sign has been posted at Burr School dumpster. Comment (HS): some illegal dumping incidents in private dumpsters—any plans to track? WT: not currently tracking dumping into private dumpsters but may consider in

the future. Waste Management (WM) will take over Bulky Waste data management under the new contract (7/1/2020), which will save SMMD staff time.

Not much public comment received regarding new bulky waste pickup fee. MS noted some complaints regarding the new fee have been posted on local neighborhood social media.

Resource Recovery Center (RRC) Reopening: RRC reopened on an appointment-only basis on June 2 (following the Covid-19 State of Emergency closure in March). The appointment system is working as planned. The 15-min slots are not a rigid time limit but can prevent ‘lingerers’ at the RRC. The cardboard compactor has not experienced backups. At first there was a lot of cardboard brought to RRC, but less now.

The appointment system will continue at least through July. Staff is able to check proof of residency more closely under the appointment system and has found approximately 15-20 cars per day arrive from outside of Newton - they are turned away as the Goodwill trailer is not present. Due to logistics associated with reopening requirements, occasionally the entrance gate cannot be staffed to check for proof of residency. MS: What will be the basis to discontinue the appointment system? WT: TBD after more time open. Will continue spot-checking for residency after appointment system ends.

A Household Hazardous Waste collection date is scheduled for July 16 at RRC, using the appointment system. High number of appointments (approx. 160) so far.

‘Scavenging’ at RRC: WT views scavenging as active rummaging through materials, such as the metal scrap area (with trip hazards) or in a rolloff container. SMMD is not as concerned about residents picking up materials left outside a dropoff dumpster where it is not dangerous or disruptive. MS: Scavenging policy to be developed? An incident occurred yesterday with a resident. WT: For now, “No Scavenging” signs have been posted. She will look into yesterday’s incident. MR: As was planned pre-Covid-19, SWC can form a subcommittee to propose a scavenging policy. Comment (HS): There has been an uptick in illegal dumping at commercial property. WT had not heard of that before, please keep an eye on.

New SMMD office trailer has been delivered to RRC, to be connected to sewer, water, electricity, and fiber optic. SMMD’s move from Crafts Street office to the new trailer is expected by the end of summer.

Swap Shop/Book Shed Reopening: SMMD is working with the Health and Human Services Dept. to approve a safety protocol, and then hopes to re-open. Non-RRC options for reusable materials have been listed on the DPW website.

Curbside Compliance: Compliance program has been on hold during the Covid-19 State of Emergency. Planning to pursue the curbside cart inspection program in late summer, and begin issuing compliance letters again.

Organics Program: 1,755 curbside Black Earth Composting (City partner) subscriptions (1,534 as of February 27). Spring marketing push was postponed due to Covid-19, though the DPW and Mayor Fuller have promoted the program several times in their newsletters.

‘Soft’ launch of City’s new organics (food waste) drop-off program at RRC probably in July. Goal is to open a total of three organics drop-off locations throughout the City.

Other Items: KS: Observed the number of Big Belly units at some public spaces is not consistent with the location's need. For example, Crystal Lake has only one but needs more units now during the summer, while schools do not need them. Sent a message to Parks & Rec Dept in early June, has not yet received a reply.

Plastic Bags Ban/Reusable Bags Suspension in State of Emergency:

In response to SWC's inquiry, Marie Lawlor (Legal Dept.) stated that the SWC, as an advisory body, cannot be a signatory to a letter without approval from the Mayor or City Council (regarding a Conservation Law Foundation letter in support of rescinding the Covid-19-related state ban on reusable bags). The deadline for submitting signatures passed before any further discussion or action could be taken.

Trash Reduction Goals/SWC Goals:

WT plans to apply for a MassDEP Technical Assistance Grant in August to request MassDEP data coordinator assistance for data-gathering and preparing a report on recommendations for curbside collection changes. Report completion target is summer 2021.

Members discussed interest in focusing the 2020 SWC goals on setting long-term (5-yr and up) goals for the City. SWC's 5-yr and 30-yr trash reduction goals with action items will help reach the broad goals. SWC goals will also help prepare for the next hauling contract (2025) and incineration contract (2027). Important to educate City Council, residents, etc. on the looming waste disposal situation (diminishing capacity, increasing cost) and need for policy changes. MC (President, Green Newton): To promote education, Green Newton can host a talk in their library series. MK: Include implementation section in SWC goals, and review of other communities' experiences. The Chair will prepare draft 2020 SWC goals based on the discussion and inquire with M. Lawlor as to sharing with members for editing on Google Docs. Goal is to collate members' edits into a revised document, if possible, to be discussed and voted on at the next meeting.

New Hauler Contract:

The new 5-year hauler contract with WM goes into effect on July 1. WM will be responsible for cart purchase, maintenance and administration; and bulky waste and white goods requests and pickups - saving the City \$175K/year. The contract also includes much greater detail regarding recycling contamination audits, excess fees and single stream recycling collection. Due to significant global increases in recycling costs, the new contract's recycling processing base fee has increased to \$89/ton, with no cap. If recyclables become more valuable with market fluctuations (>\$89/ton), there will be a 70% revenue share with the City.

Other Announcements:

The City Council recently approved the Mayor's appointment of John Lewis to the Commission.

Next meeting - Thursday, July 23, 2020, 7:00-8:45 pm, Zoom Online Conference

Meeting adjourned at approximately 9 pm.