

Newton Solid Waste Commission Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 21, 2020, 7:00-8:45 pm
Newton Free Library Room B, Newton MA

Members in attendance: Marian Rambelle (Chair), Sunwoo Kahng, Robin Maltz, Seth Parker, Karen Slote, Miles Smith

Others: Waneta Trabert (Director, DPW Sustainable Materials Management (SMM) Division), Phil Arpino (Parks, Recreation & Culture Dept), Alison Leary (Newton City Councilor), Ann Dorfman, Benjamin Lee, John Lewis, Meryl Kessler, Sandy Jones

Members absent: Steve Ferrey, Brita Lundberg

Approval of December 19, 2019 Meeting Minutes: Vote taken, with unanimous approval of the minutes with the following revision: Delete “through manufacturer” in the section on mattress recycling.

Extended Producer Responsibility:

John Lewis (resident) gave a presentation on the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) concept and status of legislation, using slides provided by the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) (attached). MA state legislature is considering EPR legislation, led by western MA communities which have been hit hard by rises in recycling costs. WT noted that every European country has EPR requirements and the concept is taking shape in several US states (e.g., Maine). Discussion centered on the possible role of SWC, Mayor, and the City Council in furthering EPR legislation, with the conclusion that, although EPR is mainly a State level issue, the City Council could adopt a resolution supporting EPR legislation. Councilor Leary will docket it if John Lewis provides a draft resolution. SWC and SMMD can also include support of EPR initiatives in the City’s forthcoming 5-year Sustainable Materials Management Strategy.

Public Spaces Recycling Update (Phil Arpino, Parks, Recreation & Culture Dept):

Outdoor snacking, activities, etc. in public places typically decrease in winter, which has lowered the quantity and frequency of recent Big Belly trash and recycling bins collection. The contamination rate in BB recycling bins remains at 14%, similar to the same period last year. Informational plastic wraps describing acceptable recyclable items were added to 20 bins in Sept. 2019.

Non-compacting BB recycling bins will be retrofitted with flap doors (to replace the current doors with holes) in the spring - this will complete the transition of all BB recycling bins to flap doors (to help reduce contamination rates). Foot pedals have been added to bins outside the Library and City Hall, and they will be added as other bins are replaced with new models.

Question: Can additional BB bins be placed in high traffic areas during summer months? Phil replied that BB bins cannot be leased for only part of the year, but they can be moved seasonally where needed most. He will consider placing BB bin in the suggested Cronin’s

Landing area of Crystal Lake, although the expense of a new collection station there may prohibit it.

There was a question on the number of traditional public trash bin locations prior to Big Belly vs. after Big Belly. Phil noted that 174 BB combo (trash/recycling) stations replaced 400 traditional public bins. About 50 traditional locations remain around the city (some with only trash, some with trash/recycling, and some with trash/recycling/dog waste bins).

By-laws/Ordinance Change Update:

The final revised versions of the Commission’s proposed By-laws and proposed Ordinance change (Article V, Sec. 7-50 - 7-52) received from Assistant City Solicitor Marie Lawlor, who added the definition of a quorum to both documents to clarify that a quorum shall consist of a majority of the members serving on the commission, were discussed. A member pointed out that the Ordinance’s text on grant applications is obsolete because the Commission does not currently, and will not in the future, apply for and receive grants or expend funds (Sec. 7-52 (b)). Discussion that this grant language may have been applicable in an earlier period, but it is not currently applicable.

The Ordinance change needs to be approved by the City Council, but the Chair will check whether the portions of the new By-laws that are consistent with the current Ordinance can be implemented prior to approval of the Ordinance change. The Chair also will check on the appropriate next steps.

Vote taken and passed unanimously by all members present:

The versions of the proposed By-laws and Ordinance changes received from the Assistant City Solicitor are approved. The Chair will request approval from the Assistant City Solicitor of the following additional revisions requested by the Commission:

For the proposed Ordinance change, in Article V, Sec. 7-52(b):

- Add “and” following “...to the impact of such laws and regulations upon the city;”
- Add a period at the end of “...contracts which implement such activities”, and delete “; and to apply for and receive grants and expend funds appropriated for its use for the purposes set forth in this subsection, provided that no expense may be incurred by the commission without the prior approval of the commissioner of public works.”

For the proposed By-laws:

- Sec. II Responsibilities:
 - In the fourth bullet item, change the semicolon to a period

- Delete the fifth bullet item (“Applying for and receiving grants and expending those funds for the Commission’s purposes, provided that no expense may be incurred by the Commission without the prior approval of the Commissioner of Public Works”)
- Sec. VI Meetings:
 - In the fourth bullet item, change “oat” to “at”

Members interested in serving as Election Co-Coordiators, as described in the proposed By-laws, for the election of Commission officers planned for the Commission’s February meeting, were requested. Seth Parker and Robin Maltz expressed interest and were appointed to serve as such by the Chair.

Sustainable Materials Management (SMM) Division Update:

Public Comments: No public comments.

Curbside Compliance: 52 non-compliance tags were issued to residents in December 2019.

Curbside compliance checks were conducted by SMM in Fall 2019. Recycling carts were checked for contamination amounts and trash carts were observed for fullness: 252 households were checked over 8 days, with 100 recycling cart warnings issued and 4 recycling carts rejected. The average trash cart volume was 60%. The program will resume in the summer, funded by grant money.

Grant Applications/Newton School Committee Presentation: Grant applications will be submitted by SMM to MassDEP in June (annual grant cycle).

Liam Hurley (NPS), Waneta Trabert (Dir., SMM Division) and Joana Canedo (Green Newton School Connections Committee) gave a well-received presentation on the progress of sustainability in the Newton Public Schools and their 2020 goals to the School Committee on January 13. Subsequently, the NPS Superintendent’s email newsletter sent today to parents focused on sustainability in Newton schools. Newton North HS, Newton South HS, Pierce Elementary, and Mason-Rice Elementary Schools are starting voluntary waste sorting programs.

WT hopes to hire the two new part-time school coordinator positions in summer 2020, funded through the City’s Recycling Dividends grants from MassDEP. WT will apply for additional grants to supplement other funding needs.

New Waste Hauler Contract: New contract with Waste Management will be reviewed by the City’s Legal Department, and is expected to be signed by mid-February. The new contract details the audit process to determine the City’s recyclables contamination rate at WM’s Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) in Avon, MA. WM will conduct annual contamination audits of the City’s recyclables and will provide 60 days’ notice to the City prior to an audit. The City also can request additional audits. The contamination threshold remains at the current

10% (above which additional monthly fees are applied to the City). There will not be another audit before the new contract takes effect in July 2020.

Organics Subscription Program: 1,433 households have signed up with Newton's partner, Black Earth Composting, for weekly curbside collection. SMM will hold a composting marketing campaign to increase subscribers as well as backyard composting around Earth Day in April.

Proposed Reusable Containers Policy: No update (led by Health and Human Services Dept.)

Proposed Private Hauler/Recycling Ordinance Change: No update since last Commission meeting.

Other - Education: Currently, printed educational materials on trash/recycling services are only offered in English, but SMM plans to offer printed and online materials in Mandarin, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian through the course of the year.

The new mandatory 10 cent bag fee charged to customers by larger retailers (who were already subject to the single-use plastic bag ban) went into effect in early January. WT is not aware of any issues reported regarding the change.

New Bulky Waste Ordinance Update: The bulky waste ordinance changes for curbside pickup will go into effect on February 1 (currently no fee; new fees of \$25/bulky item, \$20/white goods item). Significant increase in bulky waste pickup requests in January, prior to the new fees.

Trash Reduction Goals Update/2020 Commission Goals:

Most of the 2019 SWC goals (described in the SWC's 2018 Annual Report) were achieved and will be reviewed along with proposed 2020 SWC goals at the next meeting. The focus of the 2020 goals and the next several years should be on preparing for the waste hauling contract that will follow in 2025, as well as the end of the current waste treatment/disposal contract with Wheelabrator in 2028. This will include long-term recommendations on potential changes to curbside collection and gathering feedback from City Councilors. The Climate Action Plan adopted by the City could be a guide to mapping out a zero waste action plan. The SWC will also work with the SMM Division as it develops a 5-year waste management plan, due in June.

Other Announcements:

A suggestion was made to publish multiple future meeting dates to the SWC meeting agenda. Also suggested was a change in the regular meeting dates as Waneta has difficulty attending on the third Thursday of the month; perhaps change to the 4th Thursday of the month.

Next meeting - Originally scheduled for February 20, 2020, 7:00-8:45 pm, but due to potential conflicts, members will be polled on alternate dates for the meeting. Final date to be announced.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:45 pm.