

Newton Solid Waste Commission Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 27, 2020, 7:00-8:45 pm
Newton Free Library Room B, Newton MA

Members in attendance: Marian Rambelle (Chair), Steve Ferrey, Sunwoo Kahng, Brita Lundberg, Seth Parker, Karen Slote, Miles Smith

Others: Waneta Trabert (Director, DPW Sustainable Materials Management Division), Jim McGonagle (Commissioner, DPW), Shawna Sullivan (Chief of Staff, DPW), Alison Leary (City Councilor), Ann Dorfman, Carolyn Gombosi, Sandy Jones, Meryl Kessler, John Lewis, Carl Valente

Members absent: Robin Maltz

Approval of January 21, 2020 Meeting Minutes:

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

By-laws/Ordinance Change Update:

The proposed Ordinance change (Article V, Sec. 7-50 - 7-52), as approved at the Commission's January 21, 2020 meeting, was approved by the Assistant City Solicitor on January 31, 2020.

A City Council Docket Request for the Commission's proposed Ordinance change was submitted by the Chair on behalf of the Commission to the City Clerk's office on February 10, 2020. Councilor Leary (additional sponsor of the docket request) will check with the City Clerk on the docketing status for a meeting. The City Council will vote to refer the proposed Ordinance change to the Public Facilities Committee for consideration. Upon approval by the Public Facilities Committee, the full City Council will then vote on its passage. The entire process is estimated to take one to two months.

The Chair also checked with the Assistant City Solicitor on 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 Assistant City Solicitor stated that the proposed Ordinance change must be passed by the City Council before the new By-laws (as a whole) can take effect. Thus, the Commission's elections are on hold until the Ordinance change passes.

Change to Regular SWC Meeting Date:

Discussion on changing the Commission's regular meeting date from the 3rd Thursday of the month. Regular meetings will now be held on the 4th Thursday of the month, beginning on March 26, 2020.

Sustainable Materials Management Division (SMMD) Update:

Public Comments: No public comments. 40 letters were sent in January and 43 in February.

Curbside Compliance: 40 warning letters were sent in January and 43 in February.

Organics Subscription Program: A total of 1,534 households are currently signed up for Black Earth Composting’s weekly curbside organics collection subscription service (up from 1,433 households as of January 21). Since some subscribers share their composting bin with neighbors and some residents compost at home, the total number of households composting in the city is assumed to be higher. Threshold to trigger a subscriber price decrease is 3,000 households.

SMMD will begin a free residential organics drop off program at 3 locations: City Hall, Rumford Ave, and perhaps at the Newton Highlands Playground. The City Hall and Rumford Ave. locations will use 64-gallon carts, and the Highlands Playground will likely use a 64-gallon cart surrounded by a metal lockable enclosure (\$2000). Cost to the city for pickup by Black Earth might be similar to the current \$27 fee for pick up of two carts at Mason-Rice Elementary School. If not cost prohibitive, free compostable liners could be available for residents at City Hall, similar to the system in place at Cambridge City Hall.

Bulky Waste/White Goods Pickup: New restrictions/fees for curbside bulky waste/white goods curbside pickup went into effect on February 1 and the program has rolled out smoothly. Bulky waste pickup requests increased sharply in January, ahead of a sharp decline after the February 1 start date:

| | |
|---------------|-------|
| December 2019 | 1,056 |
| January 2020 | 1,902 |
| February 2020 | 173 |

SMMD data for bulky waste requests for February over the past several years also show that the new program is having a positive impact on reducing the disposal of these items:

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|----------------|
| Feb 2017 - 641 |
| Feb 2018 - 774 |
| Feb 2019 - 805 |
| Feb 2020 - 173 |

A minor uptick of illegal dumping was noted since Feb 1, with one known incident on Church Street in Nonantum. WT will gather data to compare pre- and post-fee illegal dumping.

Residents request a pickup and pay the new fee on the city’s website. The city’s hauler (Waste Management) receives the new fees collected for this program.

Question: Are the tons of collected bulky waste tracked? WT: Currently, the tonnage can be tracked for a truck that collects bulky waste along with some residential trash. (Trash is collected manually in the truck on several streets with no access for the automated trash collection trucks). The online request system now has a dropdown box for number and type of items, which will enable classifying the materials to better estimate tonnage. Prior question as to whether a dining table and 4 matching chairs will be counted as one or five items has been resolved - WT confirmed that a dining set is counted as one item.

New Retail Bag Fee Program: City's Health and Human Services Commissioner has reported no complaints associated with implementation of the new 10c bag fee.

Newton Schools: Mason-Rice Elementary School began a cafeteria composting program, including an instructional video for students created by a parent. A custodian is playing a key role as the point of contact.

Newton North HS will roll out a revamped recycling program on March 2, starting with the cafeteria. Trained teams of students will visit homerooms to educate students and staff on the correct recycling procedures. Custodians are skeptical about student participation but are willing to try it. WT hopes the student-led uniform signage placed in all schools will make recycling easier; the signage is also consistent with wraps placed on city Big Belly recycling bins. The NNHS principal would like to begin a composting program in September 2020. In a 2/26 audit of the cafeteria, 74% of waste was found to be compostable (56% food, 16% liquid, and 2% napkins/trays). NNHS uses some compostable trays.

WT: In Fall 2021, MassDEP is likely to lower the threshold for the state's organics waste disposal ban for institutions, from 1 ton/week to 0.5 ton/week generated. NNHS cafeteria prepares food for many schools in the district and generates slightly less than 1 ton/week, so it is currently exempt from the organics disposal ban (landfills/incinerators). If the limit is lowered to 0.5 ton/week, NNHS will be required to begin diverting its organics waste from disposal.

New Waste Hauler Contract Update: City's Legal Department continues review of new contract; expected completion by end of March.

Rumford Ave. Facility Scavenging Policy: SMMD would like to encourage the reuse of dropped off items at the Rumford Ave. facility (to divert them from disposal), but cannot allow dangerous or undesirable behavior, such as 'dumpster diving' in rolloff containers. SMMD staff recently hung a sign regarding no 'scavenging' of items at Rumford Ave. SWC member commented that SWC was to work with SMMD to develop a policy and signage, per a prior meeting discussion. Discussion of several ideas (e.g., mark an area for drop off of reuse items); WT cited space/other limitations. Many factors need to be considered, so the Commission will create a subcommittee led by Miles Smith and Carl Valente to evaluate the situation and work with SMMD to formulate a scavenging policy, signage, etc.

Education: An insert will be included in residential water bills in March, with information on household hazardous waste collection, the Black Earth organics subscription program, and upcoming yard waste collection. Earth Day actions might be promoted in April in the Mayor's e-newsletter.

Trash Reduction Goals/2019/2020 SWC Goals and Planning:

A draft letter to the mayor requesting the Commission's recommended trash reduction goals.

The 2019 SWC goals (described in the SWC's 2018 Annual Report) were briefly reviewed; most goals have been achieved through efforts by SMMD, the Mayor's office, and/or the

Commission, and will be shown in the SWC's 2019 Annual Report. Most of the 2019 goals focused on specific programs or ordinances. For 2020, the focus is planned to shift to longer range goals that involve evaluation of future needs/trends and making recommendations for potential program changes (such as in trash/recycling collection frequency, bin size, expanded pay-as-you-throw or incentive program, organics, etc). The next several years will lay the groundwork for the next waste hauling contract in 2025 and the end of the city's current waste disposal contract with Wheelabrator in 2028.

Commissioner McGonagle noted that preparations for the future waste hauler contract should be completed within 3 years because contract negotiations must begin a couple years before the next contract ends on June 30, 2025. He recommended looking at the role that technology could play in the 2025 contract, such as truck cameras (for monitoring trash dumped in the truck), scales on trucks, etc. He noted that costs will continue to rise and the City must reduce waste tonnage generated to control costs.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) update:

Though EPR is mainly a State level issue, the City Council can adopt a resolution to be sent to the state legislature, in support of EPR state legislation. After the last meeting, JL provided a draft resolution created by the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) to Councilor Leary and the Chair, who revised it to be specific to Newton. Councilor Leary plans to docket the resolution, in coordination with an expected state EPR bill.

Other Announcements:

The Commission's letter to the editor in support of including Waneta Trabert as a woman "leading the way in Newton government", who was not included in the Newton Tab's December 18, 2019 article, was published on January 22, 2020.

Councilor Leary noted that the HHS letter describing the city's new policy allowing the use of reusable containers by customers at coffee shops, etc. was distributed to businesses. WT: a copy of the letter should be added to the city's website.

A resident suggested inviting the new Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Culture Nicole Banks to a future meeting.

Next meeting - March 26, 2020, 7:00-8:45 pm, Newton Free Library, Room B

Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:45 pm.