

Newton Solid Waste Commission Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 24, 2020, 7:00-8:45 pm
Zoom Online Conference

Members in attendance: Steve Ferrey, Sunwoo Kahng, Meryl Kessler, John Lewis (starting approximately 8:10 pm), Robin Maltz, Seth Parker, Marian Rambelle (Chair), Karen Slote, Miles Smith (starting approximately 7:40 pm), Carl Valente

Members absent: none

Others in attendance: Alison Leary (City Councilor) (starting approximately 7:30 pm), Waneta Trabert (Director, DPW Sustainable Materials Management Division (SMMD))

Approval of September 3, 2020 Meeting Minutes:

Vote taken to approve the meeting minutes and passed by all members present (John Lewis and Miles Smith not present).

Ordinance Change/SWC By-laws Update:

On September 9, the Public Facilities Committee discussed and voted to recommend the SWC's proposed changes to ordinance Ch. 5, Sec. 7 for approval by the full City Council. The Chair attended the committee meeting and described the proposed ordinance changes. Several City Councilors commended the Commission's work and accomplishments over the past few years.

On September 21, the full City Council voted to adopt the proposed ordinance change and it will be sent to the Mayor for approval and signature. The City Council's Committee Clerk, Cassidy Flynn, will send the Chair a copy of the signed Council Order after it is approved by the Mayor.

In order to align with the City Council-approved ordinance changes, the prior Commission-approved By-laws were revised. The proposed revised By-laws were reviewed and approved by the Legal Dept. Vote was taken to approve the revised 9/24/2020 version of the Commission's By-laws and passed by all members present.

The Chair will consult with Cassidy Flynn to submit the 9/24/2020 Commission-approved By-laws to the City Clerk's office. The By-laws will go into effect upon mayoral approval of the Council Order for the ordinance change.

The By-laws call for the election of officers (Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary) annually in January, or within 45 days after ratification of the By-laws (assumed to be the mayoral approval date of the Council Order). The By-laws provide for the appointment of two Election Coordinators to receive nominations and tally votes. In anticipation of the upcoming By-laws' ratification, the Chair appointed Robin Maltz and Miles Smith to serve as Election Coordinators for the election, to be scheduled following approval of the Council Order for the ordinance change.

Sustainable Materials Management Division (SMMD) Update:

Public Comments: Since the last meeting, one public comment was received by the Mayor's office from a resident inquiring whether recycling is worth doing. Discussion of the value of

recycling and current costs. Under the current hauling contract (effective 7/1/2020), the city's recycling cost is calculated as: \$89/ton minus the blended value of one ton of recyclables (fluctuates). The city's current recycling cost is typically \$85/ton (which is significantly lower than some other municipalities, such as Boston at \$115/ton). This is higher than the city's current trash fee (\$69/ton). WT: Low price of recyclables due largely to lack of demand for recycled materials - increasing demand would increase value of recyclables (and lower the city's recycling cost). After China's recycling market effectively closed, some other countries are still buying some US recyclables. WT noted a recent National Public Radio (NPR) piece that questioned plastics recycling over the past 40 years, but it did not include the fact that infrastructure has grown over the years to enable better recycling. She noted that recycling is not perfect, but it is still preferable to disposal. Best is to 'reduce and reuse'.

Councilor Leary would like the SMMC to encourage residents to reduce waste generated in light of the end of the incinerator contract (in 2027). Chair: This is one of the goals that will be addressed by the new SMMC subcommittees.

MassRecycle will hold a virtual conference on disposal capacity issues at the end of October.

New Hauler Contract Startup: Hauler operations continue to run smoothly since the new contract with Waste Management (WM) went into effect on July 1.

COVID-19 State of Emergency Impacts: WT currently remains as the City's meals program coordinator (her co-coordinator is leaving the city).

Resource Recovery Center (RRC)/Swap Shop/Book Shed (Rumford Ave facility): The RRC reopening since June 2 (on an appointment-only basis) continues to proceed smoothly (no timeline for ending). The Swap Shop has fewer visitors lately, but the amount of goods dropped off and taken remains voluminous. Book Shed opening remains on hold. The new trailer has gotten electricity hook-up and the SMMD office may move to the trailer by winter.

Paper shredding event planned for a Saturday in October. Date will be set next week.

Reuse Options Information: The Pinpoint Donation website link has been added to the SMMD website, and will be added to social media sites for wider promotion. Pinpoint Donation information also will be added to the next printing of handouts that are provided to residents by Swap Shop staff.

Curbside Compliance: The curbside compliance survey has been a lower priority, but preparation has begun. The Recollect app is being tested electronically for curbside compliance survey use. Existing SMMD staff will do some preliminary data gathering. No plans to hire staff for data collection.

Organics Dropoff Program: A sign will be installed for the new organics (food waste only) dropoff pilot program at the RRC for residents. The Mayor will also advertise the program. Free compostable liners for countertop containers cannot be given out as planned, since the program's MassDEP grant funds cannot be used for compostable liners.

KS: What is the status of organics promotion by MassDEP? WT: MassDEP still has grant programs for equipment and evaluating projects/organics capacity, but not for implementation of organics pilot programs.

MassDEP's Draft 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan public comments:

For MassDEP's Draft 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan re-opened comment period, the Commission's support was added to the city's comment letter prepared by WT (rather than adding the Chair as a signatory to the letter, as planned at the 9/3 meeting). The city's comments letter was then submitted to MassDEP. WT will send the Chair a copy of the final letter.

Draft 2019 Annual Report discussion:

WT: Edits needed in the annual report - change 30-year incinerator contract to 20-year contract with a consortium of 36 communities.

Vote was taken to approve the 2019 Annual Report with the above-noted edits and was passed by all members present. The annual report will be submitted to the City Clerk's office for inclusion in the Friday Packet to City Councilors.

2020 SWC goals implementation:

Discussion of the final 2020 SWC goals and objectives/methods, which are included in the final 2019 Annual Report. Councilor Leary wants to make sure some target of a Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) system is included in the 2020 goals. Chair: This is included in the goals, under the objective to "identify and evaluate potential curbside collection changes". Discussion of subcommittee meeting planning and logistics: can meetings be held in person with a zoom option available? Can reference documents be shared among subcommittee members using an online repository, such as Dropbox, for easy access? Are City Hall meeting rooms available to reserve for subcommittee meetings?

Due to Open Meeting Law, the shared documents cannot be edited online and subcommittee discussions cannot be conducted outside of a publicly-noticed meeting.

The subcommittee member assignments are now:

1. Future Trash/Recycling Needs - Meryl, Robin, John
2. Trash/Recycling Disposal Capacity - Carl, Miles, Steve
3. Trash/Recycling Strategies in Other Municipalities - Karen, Sunwoo, Seth

The Chair sent out information on the procedures for setting up Zoom meetings by the city, etc.

Public Comments/Other Announcements: Brita Lundberg announced she will not seek reappointment after her term ends on 9/30/2020; the Commission expressed thanks for her dedication and service on the Commission. Several member terms will end soon. Reappointment applications are submitted on the city's website; the Public Facilities committee then votes on sending the reappointment to the City Council for approval. Reappointment applicants are not asked to attend a Public Facilities committee meeting, as with new applicants. Upon the ordinance change, the Commission will have one open seat (of 11) after 9/30.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 pm.

Next meeting - Thursday, November 19, 2020, 7:00-8:45 pm, Zoom Online Conference