

Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission Meeting Minutes
Thursday, November 19, 2020, 7:00-8:45 pm
Zoom Online Conference

Members in attendance: Steve Ferrey, Sunwoo Kahng, Meryl Kessler, Robin Maltz, Seth Parker, Marian Rambelle (Chair), Karen Slote, Miles Smith, Carl Valente

Members absent: John Lewis

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

Approval of October 22, 2020 Meeting Minutes:

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

Elections Planning:

Reviewed descriptions in the new By-laws of the duties of the officers to be elected in January (Chair, Vice Chair (new position) and Secretary (new position)). The Chair confirmed with Marie Lawlor (Legal Department) that opting to hold the election of officers in January 2021, rather than within 45 days of ratification of the By-laws (i.e., by 12/6), is consistent with the new By-laws. Robin Maltz and Seth Parker have been appointed as the Election Coordinators by the Chair, and will receive nominations for officers and conduct the election. Self-nominations are accepted. Election Coordinators will contact each nominee to check that they would like to be a candidate for the position. The election will be held during the January 28, 2021 meeting.

Discussion of the need to change from paper ballots due to the current virtual meeting format. The Chair will ask the Legal Department how election balloting should be handled during virtual meetings.

Sustainable Materials Management Division (SMMD) Update:

Public Comments: No public comments.

New Hauler Contract Operations: 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: No change since last meeting; WT currently remains the City's Grab 'n Go meals program coordinator, currently at 2-3 hours per week. No impact to SMMD operations (with concurrent reduction in some SMMD operations during COVID-19, such as enforcement).

Resource Recovery Center (RRC)/Swap Shop/Book Shed (Rumford Ave facility): RRC continues on an appointment-only basis (no timeline for ending). Household Hazardous Waste event held today and next event will be on 12/10. Paper shredding event held on 11/14 attracted a record number of cars (477). WT provided information on the 10/22 incident at the RRC: when the facility was closed for lunch, residents who were waiting outside the gate reportedly overheard a staff conversation with offensive content. The residents informed the mayor's office and

posted on social media. The Human Resources Dept. investigated and is handling any further action (e.g., a reprimand).

The Swap Shop closed for the season in late November. The Book Shed re-opening protocol remains under review by the City's health department; it is unlikely to open until Phase 4 of the state's COVID-19 reopening plan.

Grant Applications: A one-year (starting in Jan. 2021) Technical Assistance Grant was awarded by MassDEP to the City, to analyze the City's existing curbside collection program and other municipal programs in MA and around the country, as discussed in prior meetings. SMMC subcommittee will work in conjunction with the TAG review.

City received a MassDEP Recycling Dividends grant of \$68K for eligible expenses (which can roll over from prior years), such as education, RRC signage, Black Earth Composting collection service for the new organics dropoff program at the RRC. This year the City may need to use some of the prior \$80-100K of rollover funds for increased recycling costs. The Commission can also look into the City's eligibility for use of the funds.

Curbside Compliance: SMMD staff has gathered curbside data regarding fullness of carts, and type and level of contamination in the recycling cart. No enforcement for now.

Organics Dropoff Program: Soft launch at the RRC on 11/2, by appointment only. Residents were informed via the SMMD newsletter (Green Cart Chronicle) and will be in the Mayor's email newsletter in early December. Goal is to switch to a 24-hr dropoff location at City Hall or other location. The City may also purchase three Big Belly organics collector units to place next to existing Big Belly trash and recycling units in high-traffic areas.

Other: Yard waste curbside volume last week was double the typical amount, after many trees lost their leaves in a short period of time due to a storm. The mayor's email newsletter tonight will discuss the situation and resulting delays in pickups. KS: a resident questioned the City's website information on what happens to yard waste. WT: yard waste collected curbside goes to the RRC before transfer to Hidden Acres Farm (commercial composter) or Black Earth Composting. City's new yard waste contractor (as of 7/1) uses 100-cubic yard trucks.

Proposed textile collection bins at Newton schools: One issue to be resolved is the handling of funds collected from recycling textiles at each school. City's Comptroller checked with the state - it cannot be a revolving account.

MassDEP's Draft 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan (SWMP) update:

MassDEP is reviewing over 200 public comments received and the final SWMP is expected in early 2021. MassDEP sought comments in three key areas: Environmental Justice (EJ), climate change, and COVID-19 impacts.

MassRecycle conference update:

MassRecycle's annual conference was held on 10/28 and 10/29 (virtually). Waneta Trabert moderated a roundtable on Community Outreach, as well as a panel on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). She serves as MassRecycle's Vice President and in October was elected

Chair of the Product Stewardship Institute (EPR for packaging, recycling, etc). The SMMC Chair and several Commission members attended parts of the conference. WT noted that a federal “Break Free From Plastics Act” bill (for bottles, EPR) has been introduced. MA has two competing EPR bills and the Product Stewardship Institute has been invited to work on making them into one bill. The American Chemical Society (industry group) has announced its support for a fee placed on their products. In addition, at the conference State Senator Edward Kennedy announced he is introducing a bill for mattress EPR.

WT and MassRecycle President Gretchen Carey host a monthly podcast on various recycling topics, available on MassRecycle’s website.

Comments on MassDEP Proposed Waste Ban changes:

Following last meeting’s discussion, reviewed a draft public comments letter prepared by WT, to be reviewed for approval next week by the Mayor with DPW Commissioner McGonagle. MassDEP will accept public comments through 12/5. The draft letter notes “Our highly engaged Sustainable Materials Management Commission has reviewed and weighed in on these comments.” There were no objections to the language of the draft letter.

The draft letter states the City’s strong support for 1) a threshold reduction of the commercial organics ban to ½ ton of food waste generated per week, and 2) a textiles disposal ban, but with a one-year delay of the implementation date for both to October 1, 2022 due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The draft letter, however, states the City does not support a mattress ban at this time, as it would amount to an unfunded mandate on municipalities. Rather, it states that a disposal ban for mattresses should not be implemented until an extended producer responsibility (EPR) system or a different funding mechanism is in place, as has been done successfully in CT, RI and CA. At an average recycling cost of \$15-20 per piece, Newton’s annual cost would be \$26,250 - \$35,000, based on 2020 collection data. Further, the definition of “mattress” in the proposed regulation amendments is unclear regarding “box springs”, which should be specifically incorporated into the definition to prevent ambiguity.

SMMC Subcommittees:

Subcommittee 1 - Future Trash/Recycling Needs (MK, RM, JL) reported on their first meeting. Looking at a Short-Term timeframe of 5 years (2025) and Long-Term of 30 years (2050); WT agreed with these timeframes. WT has provided data on waste, recycling, yard waste. Can create a model of short- and long-term trends; note that disruptive trends may affect data.

Looking at residential as well as municipal and school buildings. WT: would be helpful to track the frequency of school dumpster pickups, even if they are not full.

Will consider Newton’s Zero Waste goals at their next meeting.

Does their work overlap with other subcommittees? Subcommittee 2: it does not overlap with their work.

Subcommittee 2 - Trash/Recycling Disposal Capacity (CV, MS, SF) reported on their second meeting. Looking at planning for: 1) 2025 – MA loses substantial landfill capacity while waste-to-energy (WTE) capacity remains stable, and 2) 2028 - end of the city's disposal contract (Wheelabrator) on 6/30/2028. WT has provided data on trends toward rail transfer facilities for waste going to out-of-state disposal facilities, due to MA dwindling landfill capacity.

Julia Green (MassDEP technical assistance coordinator) will attend their next meeting. Ask about other communities' disposal contracts that end after 2025. Also:

- What is the cost for shipping trash by rail out-of-state?
- There is sufficient organics capacity in MA, but facilities are not centrally located. Perhaps one anaerobic digestion facility has been permitted in MA. Any plans for more AD facilities?
- Saugus City Council appointed a committee to close Waste Management's whole WTE facility when the on-site ash landfill closes (in 2023). WM's Shrewsbury landfill is scheduled to last to the late 2020s or 2030s. When ash landfills close in MA, can ash be placed in an uncontainerized gondola car for rail transport, or must it be containerized at a rail transfer station prior to rail transport?

Subcommittee 3 - Trash/Recycling Strategies in Other Municipalities (KS, SK, SP) reported on their first meeting. Looking at other municipalities, currently: 1) user-based pricing system (Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT)), and 2) composting. Ultimately, trash/recycling collection should undergo a paradigm shift so it is viewed as a "utility" (like water, electricity, etc).

A handful of communities like Newton have PAYT and only a few have similar carts. What is their pricing scheme? Is it applicable to Newton? WT: This data will be useful for the new Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) and can allow for more in-depth data collection in the TAG. Also look at Minneapolis (carts, municipal organics curbside collection).

Only good example of composting by a comparable community is Cambridge, which is funded by the City (which is not typical). Will look also at Oregon and Austin, TX.

Subcommittees will compile questions to ask other municipalities and WT can then create a questionnaire template and provide contacts at other municipalities.

Public Comments/Other Announcements:

The 2019 Annual Report was included in the 10/23 Friday Packet for City Councilors.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 pm.

Next meeting - Thursday, December 17, 2020, 7:00-8:45 pm, Zoom Online Conference