

**Newton Sustainable Material Management Commission (SMMC)**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, February 25, 2021, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Zoom Online Meeting**

**Members in attendance:** Sunwoo Kahng, Chair, Marian Rambelle, Vice Chair, Carl Valente, Secretary, Steve Ferrey (at 7:35 p.m.), John Lewis (at 8:05 p.m.), Meryl Kessler, Robin Maltz, Seth Parker, Karen Slote (at 7:20 p.m.), Miles Smith.

**Members absent:** None.

**Other participants:** Waneta Trabert, Director, DPW Sustainable Materials Management Division, Alan Gordon, Sonja McKnight.

**Introductions:** The Chair introduced Commission Members and other participants.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

On the motion by Robin Maltz, seconded by Miles Smith, the Meeting Minutes of December 17, 2020 were approved. Unanimous.

On the motion by Miles Smith, seconded by Seth Parker, the amended Meeting Minutes of January 28, 2021 were approved, correcting the typos as identified. Unanimous.

**Update on Letter to Commissioner McGonagle regarding request for citizen representation in interview process for Resource Recovery Center (RRC) Attendant position:**

Marian Rambelle reported that the previously drafted letter requesting citizen representation in the upcoming RRC Attendant position hiring process was modified (per the Commission's vote in the January 28, 2021 meeting) and was transmitted via email to DPW Commissioner McGonagle (1/31/2021 letter). Commissioner McGonagle responded via email on 2/9/2021 that, as it is a union position, the City is not able to include a citizen representative on the interview panel. However, he stated he would be grateful if the Commission would develop some interview questions for candidates for the position, and he provided a copy of the job description to aid in developing questions. In response, Ms. Rambelle provided Commissioner McGonagle with several suggested interview questions from the Commission (dated 2/24/2021). Commissioner McGonagle replied via email on 2/25/2021 that Ms. Trabert will incorporate them into her interviews with prospective applicants and she will share the outcome once the process has been completed.

**Sustainable Material Management Division (SMMD) Director's Update:**

Ms. Trabert reported that:

- In the future she hoped to provide her report, in writing and in advance of the meeting, so that the SMMC can review and discuss it at the meeting.
- She has not received any public comments since the last meeting.

- The MassDEP Technical Assistance Grant began on February 19, 2021. Ms. Julia Green from MassDEP has been assigned to this in-kind services grant. Ms. Trabert plans to meet with Ms. Green every three weeks over the course of the grant. The goal of the grant is to evaluate the City's curbside collection program and options the City may want to consider to reduce future solid waste, improve recycling and, therefore, potentially reduce collection and disposal costs. The final report is due in February 2022 and is anticipated to be presented to the Mayor and City Council after January 1, 2022.
- The RRC Swap Shop will likely reopen under the State's Covid-19 Phase 4 reopening plan.
- The RRC Attendant position interview process is being finalized with interviews likely in March 2021.
- The SMMD will prepare an informational brochure on the City's various trash, recycling and composting programs for citywide mailing this year.
- In response to Ms. Trabert's inquiry, Commissioner McGonagle made the following suggestions to the SMMC for inclusion in its goals for 2021:
  1. Improve the SMMD website, including educational brochures as part of the webpages;
  2. Identify strategies for increasing participation in the voluntary subscription food waste collection program; and
  3. Identify strategies for increasing the use of the 'Recycle Right' feature on the SMMD website and phone app.

Ms. Kahng suggested that the SMMC may want to consider creating a subcommittee in the future to work on website improvements. In response to Mr. Smith's question, Ms. Trabert replied that the City does not receive MassDEP Recycling Dividends for the Swap Shop operations.

**MassDEP Updates:**

Ms. Rambelle reported that:

- The January 28 meeting of the Solid Waste Advisory Committee was cancelled and the next scheduled meeting is on April 22.
- Nothing new to report on the draft 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan.
- The proposed waste ban regulation amendments are still in process.
- Solid Waste Site Assignment regulations may be revised in the future. This could impact RRC site if it is considered a transfer station. Ms. Trabert will contact the City's RRC consulting engineer to see if this site would be impacted by any new site assignment regulations.

**Town of Hamilton New Composting Mandate:**

Mr. Parker reported on the Town of Hamilton food waste/composting collection program, including:

- It is a mandatory program unless a resident can document a home composting effort;
- Pick up is weekly.
- Residents are provided with an organic's container.

- Hamilton likely has lower transportation costs for organics collection because a commercial composting facility is located in the Town.
- If a resident does not place the organics waste container by the curb on collection day, their trash will not be collected.

**SMMC Subcommittees Updates:**

Subcommittee 1: Future Trash/Recycling Needs (Ms. Kessler, Ms. Maltz, Mr. Lewis) – Ms. Kessler reported on the subcommittee’s work including:

- Over the past 19 years, Newton has seen about a 3% reduction in solid waste per year.
- During the 2009/2010 period, when the curbside cart program was implemented, there was a major reduction in solid waste collected.
- During the 2015-2019 period, Newton’s solid waste has decreased approximately 1.7% per year.
- At this rate of decrease, if no changes are made in the program, Newton is unlikely to achieve the 2025, 2030 or 2050 solid waste goals.
- The subcommittee is examining potential interventions that may be necessary to meet the City’s solid waste reduction targets.

Subcommittee 2: Trash Recycling Disposal Capacity – No report.

Subcommittee 3: Trash/Recycling Strategies in Other Municipalities – No report.

**2020 Annual Report with 2021 SMMC Goals:**

Ms. Kahng led a discussion regarding the draft 2020 Annual Report including the 2021 SMMC goals. Overall, the Commission members and Ms. Trabert advised that the 2021 SMMC goals need to be realistic and achievable, given the ongoing impact of the pandemic. Further, given that 2021 is a City election year, it will likely not be possible to propose any recommendations to the City Council in the fall. Discussions with the City Council will likely have to wait until the new Council is seated in January 2022.

Ms. Kahng will add Commissioner McGonagle’s suggested goals to the SMMC 2021 annual goals; add research of black plastic takeout containers to the goals; and make other revisions as discussed. A revised draft 2020 Annual Report and 2021 SMMC goals will be discussed and voted on at the next meeting. Ms. Kahng plans to send the revised document to the members in advance of the next meeting.

**Public Comments/Announcements:** Ms. McKnight suggested that the SMMC consider engaging students on the importance of recycling and waste reduction, as young people can be very influential with their parents. In response, members noted that Green Newton’s School Connections Committee has taken the lead and actively engages students district-wide in these areas. Ms. Trabert also attends meetings and works closely with the committee.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

**Next meeting:** The next meeting of the SMMC is scheduled for Thursday, March 25, 2021 at 7 p.m., as a Zoom online meeting.

***Documents provided/discussed at meeting:***

1. *Letter from SMMC to DPW Commissioner James McGonagle regarding “Resource Recovery Center Site Attendant Position - Request for Resident Representation/Input in Selection Process”, dated January 31, 2021.*
2. *Commissioner McGonagle’s email reply, dated February 9, 2021, to SMMC letter.*
3. *“Suggested Interview Questions – Resource Recovery Center Attendant Candidates”, developed by SMMC, dated February 24, 2021.*
4. *Subcommittee 2 chart on annual solid waste disposal tonnage and projection of future tonnage and likelihood of meeting future disposal reduction targets.*
5. *Draft 2020 Annual Report including 2021 SMMC Goals.*