

**Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission (SMMC)**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, April 22, 2021, 7:24 p.m.**  
**Zoom Online Meeting**

**Members in attendance:** Sunwoo Kahng, Chair, Marian Rambelle, Vice Chair, Carl Valente, Secretary, John Lewis, Meryl Kessler (joined the meeting at 7:34 p.m.), Robin Maltz (joined the meeting at 7:32 p.m.), Seth Parker, Karen Slote, Miles Smith.

**Members absent:** Steve Ferrey.

**Other participants:** Alison Leary, City Council, Julia Malakie, City Council, Waneta Trabert, Director, DPW Sustainable Materials Management Division, Alan Gordon, Sonya McKnight.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

On the motion by Miles Smith, seconded by Seth Parker, the Meeting Minutes of March 25, 2021 were approved 8-0 on a roll call vote. Sunwoo Kahng, Marian Rambelle, Carl Valente, John Lewis, Robin Maltz, Seth Parker, Karen Slote, and Miles Smith voting yes.

**Subcommittee Updates**

Ms. Kahng provided the following information related to the work of Subcommittee 3, Trash/Recycling Strategies in Other Municipalities:

- The subcommittee looked at communities in Massachusetts and California and that are similar demographically to Newton.
- All of the surveyed communities charge residents for solid waste services through utility bills;
- California has instituted a residential composting mandate that will begin in 2022;
- All of the surveyed communities use variable cart size pricing;
- When there is not a substantial difference in the pricing between cart sizes, there appears to be less incentive to select smaller carts;
- Many of the surveyed communities price trash, recycling and yard waste/food waste composting all in one charge;
- California communities expect to absorb the additional cost of the composting mandate, at least until composting becomes a more accepted practice;
- It appears that some communities allow food waste to be comingled with the existing yard waste collection, as a first step in introducing residential food waste composting;
- The importance of ongoing educational efforts with residents was stressed by those communities surveyed;
- The infrastructure to support composting in California is now being built, as a result of the mandate; and
- Santa Clara, CA is trying a program to allow the comingling of trash and food waste, for later separation at the processing facility.

Ms. Slote added:

- Hennepin County, MN is requiring private haulers to offer organics collection;
- The State of Vermont now bans organics from disposal with trash;
- Malden, MA has recently modified its pay-as-you-go (PAYG) program (added carts to their bag system), which has generally been renamed as a SMART program (Save Money and Reduce Trash); and
- Where there is a large dollar differential between the residential collection costs by cart size, fewer residents choose the larger carts.

### **Construction and Demolition (C&D) Management**

Ms. Kahng reported that the SMMC has received an email from a resident asking whether the Commission had or is interested in collecting data on the amount of C&D waste being generated in Newton. This question was posed in the context of whether the SMMC would have interest in considering whether a so-called deconstruction mandate be adopted for residential tear-downs.

Ms. Kessler, Mr. Lewis and Ms. Rambelle agreed to explore deconstruction programs in other communities, with a goal of reporting back to the SMMC at its May 2021 meeting. Ms. Kahng will also ask the email writer whether they want to participate in this effort.

### **Implementing 2021 Goals**

Ms. Kahng asked the Commission how it would like to proceed on its 2021 goals, specifically:

1. Extended Producer Responsibility Resolution – City Councilor Leary reported that this resolution will come before the Council’s Public Facilities Committee in May. She suggested that members of the SMMC attend this meeting in support of this resolution.
2. Black Plastic Alternative for Restaurants – Ms. Kahng did an internet search of alternatives to black plastic take-out containers used by many restaurants in Newton. (Black plastic containers are not recyclable.) She found white plastic containers identically priced but not widely available. Aluminum containers are priced lower than black plastic. Compostable containers are higher in price. Ms. Kahng asked the Commission members whether they would like to begin preparing informational materials for restaurants related to alternatives to black plastic take-out containers. Mr. Lewis offered to approach the Newton-Needham Chamber of Commerce regarding surveying its restaurant members on the use of this product. Ms. Kahng asked the Commission members to conduct an informal inquiry of the restaurants they patronize as to the reasons for using black plastic rather than alternative products.

### **Pilot Study on Big Belly Alternatives**

Ms. Trabert reported that the City will be undertaking a study of alternatives to the Big Belly solar powered trash/recyclables containers, due to the high cost of this equipment. Ms. Trabert expressed support for the Big Belly product as its design helps limit contamination of trash and recyclable materials. Ms. Trabert explained that the City’s lease of the Big Belly containers ends in fiscal year 2022, which is why this study of alternatives is beginning now. The SMMC will hear more about his study at its next meeting.

## **Sustainable Materials Management Division (SMMD) Director's Update, Questions and Comments:**

Ms. Trabert presented her update report, provided in writing in advance to the Commission. There were no questions or comments.

## **Public Comments/Announcements:**

Ms. Kahng asked Councilor Leary about the status of the FY22 City budget. Ms. Leary reported that certain aspects of the budget were being increased due to the receipt of federal funds from the Covid stimulus program. Ms. Kahng expressed support for restoring funding for the SMMD staff position, which was eliminated from the FY21 budget due to the financial impact of the Covid pandemic. Ms. Leary encouraged the Commission members to contact her directly if there are other areas of the budget they would like her to support.

Ms. Kahng alerted the Commission members to the Too Good to Go app, whereby food establishments sell their goods, which are past their sell dates but still good usable products, at a deeply discounted price. This is another example of a creative way to reduce the disposal of food products.

Meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

**Next meeting:** The next meeting of the SMMC is scheduled for Thursday, May 27, 2021 at 7 p.m., as a Zoom online meeting.

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

- 1. March 25, 2021 Meeting Minutes.*
- 2. Ms. Kahng's informational chart on the cost of black plastic containers and alternative products.*
- 3. SMMD Update dated April 16, 2021: Update from SMMD since March 25 SMMC Meeting. Provided to the Commission by Waneta Trabert, SMMD Director, in advance of the meeting.*
- 4. 2020 Annual Report, City of Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission, Newton, Massachusetts.*