

**Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission (SMMC)**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, May 27, 2021, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Zoom Online Meeting**

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

**Members absent:** None.

**Other participants:** Waneta Trabert, Director, DPW Sustainable Materials Management Division (SMMD), Nicole Banks, Director, Recreation, Parks and Culture, Derek Mannion, Deputy Superintendent, Recreation, Parks and Culture, Marc Welch, Deputy Commissioner, Recreation, Parks and Culture, Phil Arpino, Assistant Superintendent for Beautification, Recreation, Parks and Culture, Sandy Jones, Alan Gordon, Sonya McKnight, Harry Sanders.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

On the motion by Miles Smith, seconded by Seth Parker, the Meeting Minutes of April 22, 2021 were approved 9-0 on a roll call vote. Sunwoo Kahng, Marian Rambelle, Carl Valente, Steve Ferrey, Meryl Kessler, Robin Maltz, Seth Parker, Karen Slote, and Miles Smith voting yes.

**Pilot Study on Big Belly Alternatives:**

Ms. Banks introduced her staff and provided a general overview of this pilot program to study a potential alternative to the Big Belly trash and recycling containers.

Mr. Arpino provided the following information:

- This will be a pilot program in three locations in the city, replacing current Big Belly trash and recycling receptacles that will be relocated to other locations.
- One goal is to reduce costs and maintenance of the Big Belly containers.
- Another goal is to reduce the City's carbon footprint by reducing the number of collection trips by City vehicles.
- The size of the hopper on the Big Belly containers is a limitation, as sometimes trash gets stuck in the hopper and signals that the barrel is full and ready for collection, when in fact it is not.
- Big Belly containers, which have large flat side panels, tend to be a target for graffiti. This takes City staff time to remove.
- There have been rodent problems with the Big Belly containers, particularly with squirrels that get trapped in the containers and attacking staff upon opening the container door.
- The Big Belly containers requires special order bags. Further, a full Big Belly bag is too heavy for City staff to safely remove and dispose of, so the City sets the 'full' limit at 20 percent, which defeats the use of this containers to reduce City collection trips.
- The proposed containers for the pilot study are Victor Stanley containers.

- Reference checks with the cities of Pittsburg and Denver on the Victor Stanley containers were very favorable.
- This will be a pilot study, beginning in mid-July. The units have 37-gallon capacity (compared to 30 for the Big Belly at the 20 percent capacity setting).
- If this pilot program is successful, the City will not renew the Big Belly lease and expand the use of the Victor Stanley containers throughout the city.
- A citizen asked whether the Victor Stanley containers will be any more successful at limiting residents who dispose of dog feces in the Big Belly receptacles. The response was that this is an education issue not one related to the style of container.
- Ms. Kahng asked about the Victor Stanley recycling containers, opportunities for limiting contamination and labeling the containers with some type of recycling information. It was explained that currently, City staff remove contamination from the recycling containers at the time of collection. In addition, there are areas to add labels at the top of the receptacles such as 'recycle', 'paper', 'bottles', etc. to help educate the public on what can be placed inside. Ms. Trabert will work with the Recreation, Parks and Culture Department to identify the best labeling.
- Ms. Slote mentioned that the containers at Crystal Lake get very heavy use and frequently overflow, suggesting a need for more containers.
- Because the Victor Stanley containers are less expensive than the current Big Belly containers, the City will be able to place more containers around the city. The City reduced the number of receptacles when it began its contract with Big Belly and there were complaints from the public because of this reduction of containers.

The Commission supports the pilot program and looks forward to its results.

#### **Planning for SMMC Report:**

The Commission had a general discussion regarding its planned report to the Mayor and City Council. A few suggestions were made to the draft outline of this report that was prepared by Ms. Kahng. Ms. Trabert offered to draft Sections I (Purpose of this Report) and II (Current Residential Waste Management in Newton) of the report.

Ms. Kahng suggested that the Commission complete the final version of the report by the end of August in time for the election season. The report should be shared with City Councilors and it was also suggested that Commission members engage with individual councilors to highlight the potential need for legislation and financial resources in support of stronger waste reduction and diversion programs in Newton.

#### **Funding for SMMD Staff:**

The Commission had a general discussion regarding advocating for the restoration of staff to the SMMD (a one-half time position was eliminated due to the financial impact of Covid-19). Ms. Trabert explained that pre-Covid, the plan was to replace her one-half time position with a full-time Northeastern University intern, but Covid put this on-hold.

On the motion by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Kessler, the Commission voted 9-0 by roll call vote to authorize the Chair to send a letter to the Mayor and City Council in support of additional staffing for the SMMD. Mr. Parker and Mr. Smith will assist Ms. Kahng with the letter. Sunwoo Kahng, Marian Rambelle, Carl Valente, Steve Ferrey, Meryl Kessler, Robin Maltz, Seth Parker, Karen Slote, and Miles Smith voting yes. Mr. Lewis left the meeting prior to this vote.

**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.

**C&D Management Survey:**

This item was deferred to a subsequent meeting.

**Black Plastic Take Out Containers:**

This item was deferred to a subsequent meeting.

**Public Comments/Announcements:**

There were no public comments or announcements.

Meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

**Next meeting:** The next meeting of the SMMC is scheduled for Thursday, June 24, 2021 at 7 p.m.

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

1. *April 22, 2021 Meeting Minutes.*
2. *Memo and Supporting Materials from Mayor Fuller, Nicole Banks and Jim McGonagle, Piloting a New Waste Receptable System. Dated May 21, 2021*
3. *SMMC Report outline, drafted by Ms. Kahng. Undated.*
4. *May 2021 SMM Update. Dated May 21, 2021. Provided to the Commission by Waneta Trabert, SMMD Director, in advance of the meeting.*