

Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission (SMMC)
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 16, 2021, 7:00 p.m.
Zoom Online Meeting

Members in attendance: Sunwoo Kahng, Chair, Marian Rambelle, Vice Chair, Carl Valente, Secretary, Steve Ferrey (joined the meeting at 7:38 p.m.), Meryl Kessler (joined the meeting at 7:08 p.m.), Robin Maltz, Miles Smith, Karen Slote, John Lewis (left the meeting at 8:46 p.m.), Seth Parker (joined the meeting at 7:07 p.m.) and Alan Gordon (left the meeting at 8:39 p.m.).

Members absent: Jim McGonagle, Commissioner, DPW, Ex-Officio.

Other participants: Alison Leary, City Council (joined the meeting from 7:05-7:45 p.m.), Waneta Trabert, Director, DPW Sustainable Materials Management Division, Sonja McKnight, Michael Orr, City of Cambridge, Conor Miller, Black Earth Compost.

Introductions:

Ms. Kahng welcomed Mr. Orr and Mr. Miller.

Approval of October 28, 2021 Meeting Minutes:

On the motion by Miles Smith, seconded by Sunwoo Kahng, the Meeting Minutes of October 28, 2021 were approved 8-0 on a roll call vote. Sunwoo Kahng, Miles Smith, Marian Rambelle, Carl Valente, Alan Gordon, Robin Maltz, John Lewis and Karen Slote voting yes.

Announcements

Ms. Kahng informed the Commission members that Ms. Maltz and Mr. Smith will serve as Election Coordinators for the selection of Commission officers. Nominations should be sent to them.

Ms. Kahng announced that Mr. Parker will be resigning from the Commission, effective January 1, 2022, having served for a total of 10 years.

Mike Orr, Recycling Director, City of Cambridge: Use of Co-digesting:

Mr. Orr provided an overview of the City of Cambridge food waste collection program. Highlights included:

- Food waste makes up approximately 41% of residential trash in Cambridge.
- All Cambridge schools began food waste collection in 2015.
- The City's pilot food waste collection program began in 2014 and was expanded to a larger number of households in 2015.
- The City began a city-wide curbside residential food waste collection program in 2018.
- Currently, 32,500 household are included in the program, or 65-70% of households, with a participation rate of 40-50%.

- The food waste collection program is provided by DPW staff/vehicles. The City also has four drop-off locations, which together collect approximately one ton per week of food waste.
- 63 small food related businesses are participating in a pilot collection program.
- The City sends its collected food waste (approximately 7 tons/day) to a preprocessing facility in Charlestown. It was selected because it is within 10 miles of the City; can handle 50+ tons per week; and is open hours consistent with the City's collection program.
- The Cambridge food waste is turned into a slurry at the facility in Charlestown, then transported to a Greater Lawrence Sanitary District wastewater treatment facility for final processing. The resulting biosolids are then sold and the methane generated is used to make electricity.
- Mr. Orr sees a trend in Massachusetts away from composting type facilities and towards anaerobic digestion (AD) facilities.
- There is no charge to residents/small businesses who participate in this program.
- Mr. Orr could not provide a cost to the City to provide this service, but it includes 2 collection vehicles with 2 staff and tip fees of \$65/ton (processing 2000-3000 tons per year).

Conor Miller, Founder and CEO, Black Earth Compost: Commercial Composting:

Mr. Miller provided an overview of his firm's commercial composting operations. Highlights included:

- Composting of food waste is valuable to the environment in that the finished product is a soil enhancement.
- Black Earth Compost processes 75% of the compost it collects at its own facilities in Manchester, Groton and Framingham, with the remaining amount going to other facilities. The composting process typically takes six months.
- The contamination (i.e., unacceptable materials) rate is approximately 1% for collected residential food waste and greater for commercial sources.
- Black Earth estimate that they collect, on average, about 12 pounds per household per week within their service area. Approximately 2300-2400 households in Newton currently subscribe to the service.
- Composting, compared to AD, is not capital intensive.
- Composting, compared to AD, is less costly for the processing of food waste.

John Lewis: Compostable Take-Out Containers:

This item was deferred to a subsequent meeting.

SMMC Report: Slides Discussion and Update:

- Ms. Kahng and Ms. Slote will participate in a December 2 forum sponsored by Green Newton and the Newton Free Library (Zoom) on moving to zero waste in Newton.
- The SMMC Report was delivered to Mayor Fuller and CEO Yeo on November 15.

- Ms. Kahng would like Commission members to meet with the Mayor to discuss the report before the December 2 forum, if possible.
- The City Council will receive the SMMC Report on November 17.
- The SMMC will be on the January 19, 2022 agenda for the Public Facilities Committee to discuss the report.
- The Commission members reviewed the draft slide deck prepared by Ms. Slote, which will be the basis of the presentation to the Mayor and City Council. Commission members were quite impressed with the draft presentation and offered a variety of comments/suggestions.
- Ms. Kahng has spoken with City Council members Bowman and Leary, who suggested that the SMMC present its report to the League of Women Voters, Mothers Out Front, and the 350 Mass.

November 2021 SMMD Update:

The following was discussed:

- Ms. Rambelle and Ms. Trabert reported that the SMMD will receive \$68,000 in grant funding from the State as part of the Recycling Dividends program.
- Ms. Kahng and Ms. Trabert reported that the paint collection/recycling event on October 31 was very successful. Another event is planned for the Spring of 2022.

Public Comments:

There were no additional public comments.

Meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Next meeting: The next meeting of the SMMC is scheduled for Monday, December 13, 2021 at 7 p.m. via Zoom.

Documents provided/discussed at meeting:

1. *Presentation by Mike Orr, Co-digestion program in Cambridge*
2. *Summary of Cambridge Material Management staff*
3. *Presentation by Conor Miller, Black Earth Compost Operations*
4. *November 2021 SMMD Update*
5. *Draft slide presentation for the report, Setting a Path to Zero Waste*
6. *October 28, 2021 meeting Minutes*
7. *November 15, 2021 transmittal letter to Mayor Fuller, Setting a Path to Zero Waste report*
8. *November 14, 2021 SMMC letter in support of prohibiting the sale of miniature liquor bottles*
9. *Setting the Path to Zero Solid Waste, dated November 2, 2021(updated 11/9/2021)*