

Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission (SMMC)
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 27, 2022, 7:00 p.m.
Zoom Online Meeting

Members in Attendance: Sunwoo Kahng, Chair, Marian Rambelle, Vice Chair, Carl Valente, Secretary, Meryl Kessler, Robin Maltz, Miles Smith, Karen Slote, John Lewis (joined the meeting at 7:10 p.m.), Steve Ferrey and Alan Gordon.

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

Other Participants: Alison Leary, City Council (joined the meeting at 7:16 p.m.), Pam Wright, City Council, Waneta Trabert, Director, DPW Sustainable Materials Management Division, Phil Arpino, Superintendent, DPW (joined the meeting at 7:40 p.m.).

Approval of December 13, 2021 Meeting Minutes:

On the motion by Robin Maltz, seconded by Miles Smith, the Meeting Minutes of December 13, 2021 were approved 9-0 on a roll call vote. Sunwoo Kahng, Miles Smith, Marian Rambelle, Carl Valente, Meryl Kesler, Alan Gordon, Robin Maltz, Steve Ferrey and Karen Slote voting yes.

SMMC Election:

On the motion by Robin Maltz, seconded by Miles Smith, the following slate of SMMC officers was approved on a 9-0 roll call vote: Chair: Sunwoo Kahng; Vice Chair: Marian Rambelle; Secretary: Carl Valente. Sunwoo Kahng, Miles Smith, Marian Rambelle, Carl Valente, Meryl Kesler, Alan Gordon, Robin Maltz, Steve Ferrey and Karen Slote voting yes.

Ms. Rambelle reminded Commission members to return their Conflict-of-Interest forms to the City Clerk's Office.

SMMC Report Rollout Update:

Ms. Kahng reported that on January 19, 2022 Ms. Slote presented the SMMC report to the Public Facilities Committee. She highlighted the following three priorities recommended in the report:

- The City should provide funding to prepare a Zero Waste plan;
- The City should provide funding for additional SMMD staff; and
- The City should establish specific solid waste goals.

Ms. Trabert noted that she will be meeting with Councilors Kalis and Leary regarding the recommendation for additional SMMD staffing.

Ms. Slote noted that on February 3, 2022 a presentation of the SMMC Report will be made to the League of Women Voters of Newton. 110 individuals are already signed up for this Zoom meeting. Ms. Slote asked Commission members to contact her if there were any parts of the Report presentation that should be changed.

Ms. Kahng would like Commission members to reach out to individual City Council members to see if they have read the report and have any questions. She would like this to happen in February. Commission members should contact Ms. Kahng if they are able to make these contacts.

Ms. Kahng noted that she will be drafting an article for Village14 regarding the Report.

Ms. Kahng suggested that the Commission should try to get an article in the Boston Globe's Newton Report. Ms. Kessler will work with Ms. Kahng on this.

Plastics Reductions Working Group Update:

Ms. Kahng reported the following:

- This Working Group was organized by City Council member Vicky Danberg;
- The Working Group is looking to expand the number of items that Newton would ban from use/disposal in the trash.
- The Working Group plans to send an email survey to restaurants.
- CloverLabs, which markets compostable products, suggested to the Working Group that while business buy-in is important in this type of effort, a Citywide ban is also important in order to create a 'level playing field' among all businesses.
- Brookline, which has expanded the number of items that are banned from use, also has a one-half time position to enforce their bylaw. They have had mixed results in implementing the ban (partially due to the effects of COVID restrictions) and acknowledge that providing educational materials to both new and existing restaurants is crucial in this effort.
- Newton will need to strongly consider how it will enforce a City Ordinance similar to Brookline's, should one be enacted.
- The Working Group meets again on February 10 at 7 p.m.

SMMD Update:

The following was reported/discussed:

- In response to a question from Ms. Kahng, Ms. Trabert reported that she does not have any specific information regarding the recently advertised Zero Waste staff position in Brookline.
- In response to a question from Ms. Kahng, Ms. Trabert reported that she and the DPW Commissioner are not supportive of the Goodwill trailer returning to the Rumford Avenue site. When it was at this site, there were frequent cases of illegal dumping that had to be managed by the staff at the site. Also, the trailer allowed non-Newton residents to access the site. No other site in Newton has been found for the trailer.
- In response to a question from Ms. Kahng, Ms. Trabert reported that the City's street sweeping operations will be shifted to the SMMD. This will result in Ms. Trabert having an Assistant Superintendent reporting to her. Her role overseeing street sweeping will be largely related to looking for opportunities for route efficiencies. This added responsibility should have little impact on her SMMD work and may, in fact, free up some of her time, particularly in terms of providing additional support in supervising staff at the Rumford Avenue site. Ms. Trabert also commented that filling the vacant Administrative Assistant

position will free up some of her time handling administrative duties. If the SMMD received additional staff as recommended in the SMMC Report, that staff would have data analysis and policy development responsibilities.

- In response to a question from Ms. Kessler, Ms. Trabert reported that the Helpsy curbside textile collection program is running smoothly. The collection bins at Rumford Avenue sometimes overflow the day prior to collections by Helpsy. In the 3rd Quarter of 2021, 10,300 lbs. of textiles were collected by Helpsy, resulting in a \$205 payment to the City.
- In response to a question from Mr. Smith, Ms. Trabert reported that she is adding another organic collection receptacle at Rumford Avenue and is still looking to add collection receptacles at City Hall and the southern and northern sides of the City.
- In response to a question from Ms. Slote, Ms. Trabert reported that she does not have specific information on why there was no rebate for recycled materials in December.

Update on Big Belly Alternative Pilot:

Phil Arpino, DPW Superintendent reported the following on this pilot trash/recycling receptable program:

- The Victor-Stanley (V-S) pilot receptacles, installed in September 2021, are located in Newtonville, West Newton and Newton Corner. The V-S receptacles have no hopper doors, compared to the Big Belly units.
- He has only collected limited data on these receptacles due to delays in the delivery of them.
- He would like the pilot program to have a full year (four seasons) of data before making a recommendation to the Commissioner and Mayor on whether these receptacles should be used citywide.
- He would like to add 10 additional slightly larger units (45-gallon vs the existing 35 gallon) as part of the pilot program, pending approval by the Mayor to purchase.
- The amount of contamination in the V-S recycling receptacles is similar to the Big Belly units, about 10-12 percent.
- To retrofit the entire City with the purchase of V-S units will cost upwards of \$800,000, but the annual operating costs of the V-S units will be approximately \$30,000 compared to in excess of \$300,000 for the annual lease costs of the Big Belly units. Therefore, the payback period for the V-S units would be approximately three years.

Business Recycling Ordinance Update:

City Council member Alison Leary provided the following update on the proposed business recycling ordinance she has been working on:

- The draft ordinance is ready to go to the Public Facilities Committee;
- As written, the ordinance would require commercial waste haulers who are permitted to operate in Newton to offer bundled recycling collection, consistent with the State's ban on disposing of certain materials;
- The draft ordinance has been sent to the Charles River Chamber of Commerce for its input; and

- Councilor Leary will be doing a survey and canvas of business owners and property managers regarding the draft ordinance.

SMMC members offered the following comments:

- Ms. Slote noted that while current State waste bans have been in effect for many years, there is little enforcement done by the State.
- Ms. Trabert noted that while there is a State waste ban in effect, there is no recycling mandate in Massachusetts either. Further, the State's ban provides that up to 10 percent of solid waste disposed may contain recyclable materials without the load being rejected at the disposal site.
- Ms. Slote asked whether the City should consider directly providing small businesses with a fee-based recycling collection service.
- Ms. Kahng asked of any research done on the cost to businesses for implementing a recycling ordinance. Councilor Leary responded that this is one reason for the survey she is proposing to undertake.
- Ms. Kahng asked who would be responsible for educating businesses, if the proposed Ordinance is adopted. Ms. Trabert responded that this is also a concern to her. Other states, such as California and Vermont have uniform statewide standards on business recycling.
- In response to a question by Ms. Kahng, Councilor Leary asked if SMMC members would be able to assist in the business canvassing. Further, this proposed Ordinance will likely be heard by the Public Facilities Committee and/or Programs and Services Committee in late March or April and SMMC input would be useful.
- Ms. Kahng will add this matter to a future agenda of the SMMC.

Public Comments/Open Announcements:

There were no additional public comments.

Ms. Kahng asked SMMC members to contact her if they are able to contact their Ward Councilor to discuss the SMMC Report.

Ms. Kahng noted that Green Newton has a membership to Mass Recycle and would be willing to sponsor SMMC members interested in attending the Mass Recycle Annual Conference on March 31-April 1.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Next Meeting: The next meeting of the SMMC is scheduled for Thursday, February 24, 2022 at 7 p.m. via Zoom.

Documents Provided/Discussed at Meeting:

1. *January 2022 SMMD Update, dated 1/21/2022*
2. *December 13, 2021 Meeting Minutes*
3. *SMMC Report PowerPoint Presentation*