

Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission (SMMC)
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, March 24, 2022, 7:00 p.m.
Zoom Online Meeting

Members in Attendance: Sunwoo Kahng, Chair, Marian Rambelle, Vice Chair, Carl Valente, Secretary (left the meeting 7:55-8:05 p.m.), Steve Ferrey, Robin Maltz, and Alan Gordon (left the meeting at 7:55 p.m.).

Members Absent: Meryl Kessler, Miles Smith, Karen Slote, John Lewis, Jim McGonagle, Commissioner, DPW, Ex-Officio.

Other Participants: Alison Leary, City Council, Waneta Trabert, Director, DPW Sustainable Materials Management Division, Seth Parker, David Donahue.

Approval of February 24, 2022 Meeting Minutes:

On the motion by Alan Gordon, seconded by Robin Maltz, the Meeting Minutes of February 24, 2022 were approved 5-0 on a roll call vote, with one abstention. Sunwoo Kahng, Marian Rambelle, Carl Valente, Alan Gordon, and Robin Maltz voting yes and Steve Ferrey abstaining.

Discussion of 2021 SMMC Annual Report and 2022 Goals:

Ms. Kahng reviewed the updated draft of the 2021 SMMC Annual Report and 2022 Goals. On the motion by Alan Gordon, seconded by Sunwoo Kahng, the report was approved 6-0 on a roll call vote. Sunwoo Kahng, Marian Rambelle, Carl Valente (except for the section proposing bi-weekly waste collection as an option), Alan Gordon, Steve Ferrey and Robin Maltz voting yes. Ms. Kahng will forward the report to the Mayor's Office and City Council.

Mattress Recycling Update:

Ms. Trabert updated the SMMC on plans for removing mattresses from the waste stream in preparation for the State mattress ban beginning in November 2022. Currently, WM is picking up mattresses as a bulky item, for which the City charges a collection fee. Ms. Trabert's original plan was to move mattress collection to the 'white goods' category, with a fee for collecting and recycling of this item. The vendor who WM subcontracts with for this service is no longer willing to pick up and recycle mattresses. As the first quotes for recycling mattresses have been far more expensive than anticipated, Ms. Trabert will continue to seek quotes from additional vendors. Ms. Trabert explained that the City ordinance will need to be revised in order to implement a fee for both the collecting and recycling of each mattress piece. Residents who bring their mattress to the Rumford Ave. site will only be charged the recycling fee. In response to a question, Ms. Trabert responded that there are currently four mattress recyclers in the State.

Yard Waste Update:

Ms. Trabert provided the following update on this program:

- The City will transition from having yard waste collected by WM to the DPW staff. WM has been unable to fulfill its contractual obligation regarding yard waste collection.
- The City will lease three packer trucks and hire six staff.
- The yard waste program will begin the week of April 11.
- The City expects to save money by bringing this service in-house vs. contracting with WM.
- In the off-season, the yard waste staff will be allocated to other DPW programs and tasks.

SMMD Update:

The monthly report was presented by Ms. Trabert and a variety of questions and comments were discussed.

Regarding the MassDEP Technical Assistance Grant Report, Ms. Trabert reported that she and Julia Grant, the MassDEP staff person assigned to this project, are working on data analysis related to various options for reducing curbside trash and increasing recycling. She expects the final report will be a more visual presentation rather than lengthy narrative.

Public Comments/Open Announcements:

Ms. Kahng asked what the process might be for the City Council to adopt the SMMC’s waste reduction goals. Councilor Leary commented that there are several possibilities: adoption of a resolution to adopt the goals in the SMMC report; addition of the goals to the City’s Climate Action Plan; or the Mayor could create an order to adopt the goals (based on data). She also noted that budget season starts soon and goes into June, and July and August are slow months for the City Council.

Ms. Kahng asked Ms. Trabert about the availability of MassDEP Recycling Dividends points if the City Council were to pass an ordinance requiring food establishment customers to request single-use items (such as, plastic utensils, etc.). Ms. Trabert replied that one or two points, depending on the items covered, would be available.

Ms. Kahng reminded the Commission members that Sunday, April 24 is the Earth Day Festival in Newton, at the War Memorial side of City Hall from 1-4 p.m. Ms. Trabert and representatives from the Recycling Committee will be in attendance with possibly a demonstration on mattress recycling. The City’s voluntary food waste composting program will also be promoted.

Councilor Leary noted that the canvassing of private businesses regarding the proposed waste and recycling hauling ordinance for businesses will begin in April.

Ms. Kahng commented that she has been contacted by a Boston College student organization that has offered to assist the City in its recycling efforts. She suggested that perhaps they could be involved in the canvassing efforts noted above. Ms. Kahng will reach out to this student group to alert them to this effort.

Ms. Trabert noted that the MassRecycle Conference is March 31 and April 1 and encouraged Commission members to attend. Ms. Trabert will be presenting on various panels at the Conference.

Meeting adjourned at 8:24 p.m.

Next Meeting: The next meeting of the SMMC is scheduled for Thursday, April 28, 2022 at 7 p.m. via Zoom.

Documents Provided/Discussed at Meeting:

- 1. March 2022 SMMD Update, dated 3/18/2022*
- 2. February 24, 2022 Meeting Minutes*
- 3. Revised draft of 2021 SMMC Annual Report and 2022 Goals*