

Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission (SMMC)
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 26, 2022, 7:00 p.m.
Zoom Online Meeting

Members in Attendance: Sunwoo Kahng, Chair, Marian Rambelle, Vice Chair, Carl Valente, Secretary, Steve Ferrey, Miles Smith, Karen Slote, Robin Maltz, Alan Gordon, and John Lewis (joined the meeting at 7:13 p.m., left the meeting at 8 p.m.).

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

Other Participants: Waneta Trabert, Director, DPW Sustainable Materials Management Division, Susan Legere, Newton Recycling Committee, Shara Urtel, Sonja McKnight, Sandy Jones, Ulrike Mueller and Margie Bell.

Approval of April 28, 2022 Meeting Minutes:

On the motion by Miles Smith, seconded by Karen Slote, the Meeting Minutes of April 28, 2022 were approved 8-0 on a roll call vote. Sunwoo Kahng, Marian Rambelle, Karen Slote, Carl Valente, Miles Smith, Robin Maltz, Steve Ferrey and Alan Gordon voting yes.

Open Announcements:

Susan Legere, Newton Recycling Committee, provided an update on her discussion with Linda Walsh, Newton Health and Human Services Commissioner, regarding food establishments being able to support customers who wish to use their own reusable containers for food orders. Ms. Walsh said that there had been no change in City rules and regulations since the Department first sent a letter to food establishments on this matter. That being said, Ms. Walsh would like her Department to update its previous guidance letter on this matter and hoped to do so by the end of June.

Recyclables Presentation and Discussion

Margie Bell and Ulrike Mueller, Co-Founders of Recirclable, made a presentation on their company, which is focused on providing recyclable take out containers to food establishments.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- Only a very small percentage of the take out containers used by food establishments are recycled or recyclable;
- Compostable containers are even a less desirable solution, as they can only be composted in so-called industrial facilities, the cost to purchase these containers is more than double that of plastic containers, and they have a greater environmental impact (e.g., more energy used to produce and they contain the non-degradable ‘forever’ chemical contaminant PFAS) than single-use alternatives;

- Recirclable’s business model is to allow customers to sign up to use recyclable food take out containers, at no cost, and further there is no charge to the customer if the container is returned to a participating food establishment within two weeks;
- Participating food establishments are charged each time it uses one of Recirclables containers;
- Once a recyclable container is returned by a customer, it is cleaned by the restaurant, to be ready for reuse;
- The containers currently being used are made in the Netherlands;
- These containers can reduce up to 80 percent of the climate emissions compared to single use containers; and
- Recirclable is looking to expand its business to other food establishments in Massachusetts and does not have a geographic limitation on establishments that wish to participate.

SMMC Report Update:

Ms. Kahng led a discussion on the following:

- As discussed at the previous SMMC meeting, the City Council approved a Resolution regarding solid waste reduction goals. Thanks to Ms. Kahng, Mr. Gordon and Ms. Kessler who drafted the resolution at the request of City Councilor Alison Leary. The Mayor responded to that Resolution, in part, that the Fuller Administration, the City Council, the Sustainable Materials Management Commission and our residents must take meaningful actions to achieve Zero Waste.
- The question was raised whether the SMMC should update its report to make the waste reductions goals more in line with a the MassDEP waste reduction goals. The consensus was not to change the report at this time.
- MassDEP, in a recent webinar, appears to be strongly recommending that if municipalities adopt cart-based SMART programs, that they only offer one cart size. Ms. Trabert commented, however, that variable cart sizes do work in many communities, as long as there is a significant price differential. It was recommended that Commission members view this webinar.

SMMD Update:

Ms. Trabert reviewed the May 2022 SMMD update, dated May 20, 2022, responding to a number of questions from Commission members.

Public Comments/Open Announcements:

Mr. Gordon would like to undertake a program to further promote the Black Earth Compost food compost program in the City. Commission members who wish to assist in this effort should contact Mr. Gordon directly.

Meeting adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Next Meeting: The next meeting of the SMMC is scheduled for Thursday, June 23, 2022 at 7 p.m. via Zoom.

Documents Provided/Discussed at Meeting:

- 1. Recirclable presentation*
- 2. April 28, 2022 Meeting Minutes*
- 3. Resolution – City of Newton Establishing Zero Waste Goals for 2030 and 2050 (undated)*
- 4. May 2022 SMMD Update, dated May 20, 2022*