

Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission (SMMC)
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, November 17, 2022, 7:00 p.m.
Zoom Online Meeting

Members in Attendance: Sunwoo Kahng, Chair, Marian Rambelle, Vice Chair, Carl Valente, Secretary, Steven Ferrey, Meryl Kessler, Alan Gordon, Karen Slote, Miles Smith and Robin Maltz.

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

Other Participants: Alison Leary, City Council, Waneta Trabert, Director, DPW Sustainable Materials Management Division, Shara Ertel and Sonya McKnight.

Approval of October 27, 2022 Meeting Minutes:

On the motion by Ms. Kahng, seconded by Mr. Gordon, the Meeting Minutes of October 27, 2022 were approved 7-0-1 on a roll call vote. Ms. Kahng, Ms. Rambelle, Mr. Valente, Ms. Kessler, Mr. Gordon, Mr. Ferrey, Ms. Slote and Ms. Maltz voting yes. Mr. Smith abstaining.

January Officer Election: This item was deferred to the December meeting.

Discussion of PAYT Recommendations in Light of Upcoming Override and Debt Exclusion:

Mr. Valente raised the question whether the Mayor's Office has provided any additional guidance to the SMMC regarding its Report (November 2021) recommendations, all of which have financial implications for the City and its residents. These recommendations could potentially be a discussion item within the community in light of the Mayor's announcement to seek a Proposition 2 ½ Override and two Debt Exclusions in the spring of 2023. The SMMC had a full discussion on this matter, which included the following highlights:

- The proposed Override does not include any additional funding for solid waste and recycling collection or disposal;
- Ms. Trabert believes the Mayor was direct at the SMMC August 2022 meeting in terms of the SMMC continuing to undertake educational outreach to residents regarding the Commission's Report goals although Ms. Trabert has not received any specific guidance from the Mayor's Office regarding methods the SMMC should proceed with the educational outreach. She views the report recommendations, however, as goals over a 2–3-year period;
- Councilor Leary commented that the City's Chief Financial Officer is well aware of the likely cost increases the City will see in both its next collections contract and disposal contract;
- Ms. Trabert explained that the SMMD's MassDEP Technical Assistance Grant Report (SMMD Report), which is currently in executive review, will build on the SMMC Report; will have a broader view and reference the SMMC Report for more specific recommendations and supporting data; and largely be a blueprint for scope of the next solid waste/recycling collections contract. She went on to explain that the SMMD Report will

likely be released in late Spring. *The commission discussed the delayed release of the Report and some members expressed frustration at another delay.* (Italicized sentence added by amendment at 12/15/2022 SMMC meeting.)

- Ms. Kahng suggested that the Commission has other work it can focus on until the SMMD Report is released.

While not directly related to the SMMC Report or upcoming SMMD Report, Ms. Trabert commented that the recent collapse of the recycling market should not be overly concerning for the Commission. Recycled materials are a commodity and commodity prices generally change with market demand and other economic forces outside of the City's control. While the City is currently paying in the range of \$93-95/ton to dispose of recycled materials, the City has some cost protections in that it does not pay more than the full processing fee for recycled materials.

Discussion on Recyclability of Plastics: This agenda item was deferred to a future meeting. Ms. Slote did comment that she created some charts that help illustrate recycling rates of different types of plastic.

Scope of a Comprehensive Zero Waste Plan: This agenda item was deferred to a future meeting.

SMMD Update:

Ms. Trabert reviewed the November SMMD update, dated November 12, 2022, responding to a number of questions and comments from Commission members, including:

- Confirmed that the City will received a State grant of \$70,000 to underwrite the costs of food waste collection containers for residents newly subscribing to this service (Black Earth Compost).
- The City is providing a drop off area at the Rumford Ave. facility for residents to dispose of their yard waste through December 9.

Public Comments/Open Announcements:

There were no public comments.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Next Meetings: The next meeting of the SMMC will be Thursday, December 15, 2022 via Zoom.

Documents Provided/Discussed at Meeting:

1. *October 27, 2022 Meeting Minutes*
2. *November 2022 SMMD Update, dated November 12, 2022*