

**2020 Annual Report**  
**City of Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission**  
**Newton, Massachusetts**

The Sustainable Materials Management Commission (SMMC) is made up of residents appointed to advise the Mayor and the City Council on all aspects of municipal solid waste collection and disposal and to monitor and make recommendations regarding the City's activities in these areas. On October 20, when the SMMC by-laws and ordinance changes to Article V, Secs. 7-50 to 7-54 went into effect, the Commission was changed from the Newton Solid Waste Commission to the Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission.

In 2020, the SMMC began with eight appointed members: Steve Ferrey, Sunwoo Kahng, Brita Lundberg, Robin Maltz, Seth Parker, Marian Rambelle (Chair), Karen Slote, and Miles Smith. Meryl Kessler and Carl Valente were appointed as new members in May, and John Lewis joined the Commission in June. Brita Lundberg concluded her term at the end of September. Upon the implementation of the SMMC ordinance changes and by-laws, the SMMC began the process of electing a Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary with elections held in January 2021. The SMMC meets monthly through the year, typically on the 4th Thursday at 7pm at the Newton Free Library. Due to governmental restrictions and technical issues resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic state of emergency, the SMMC was not able to hold meetings in March and April, and meetings from May through December were conducted online.

The Newton DPW Sustainable Material Management Division (SMM) also operated at a limited capacity through a large part of 2020 because of the COVID-19 restrictions. Curbside collection continued to operate as usual, but the Resource Recovery Center (RRC) remained closed from March through May, and certain operations such as the Book Shed, Goodwill, and Paint Reuse Shed were suspended for the remainder of the year. The Swap Shop opened in mid-June with a COVID-19 safety protocol and closed in October; Newton's Swap Shop was the only one known to have opened last year.

At the end of 2019, the SMMC recommended that the City set the goal of reducing solid waste disposal by 70% by 2050 (compared to 2018 levels). In 2020, the SMMC began laying the groundwork for achieving this long range goal, using the next waste hauling contract in 2025 and the end of the city's current waste disposal contract with the Wheelabrator waste-to-energy facility in 2028 as opportunities for implementing new waste reduction strategies. Three SMMC subcommittees were formed in 2020 to begin evaluating the current status and short- and long-term projections of Newton's trash disposal capacity and options, future needs/trends, and other communities waste reduction programs. The results of the subcommittees' research will inform the upcoming SMM Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) in-kind technical assistance grant. This project will assess curbside collection services and provide recommendations for program changes focused on waste reduction and cost savings. The final report is expected in Mid 2022.

### **Future Waste and Recycling Needs**

This SMMC subcommittee reviewed a number of MassDEP documents regarding future solid waste capacity and historical disposal trends. The Subcommittee also reviewed historical data regarding Newton's trash and recycling tonnage and discussed appropriate interventions that could lead to achieving Newton's waste reduction goals.

In 2021 the Subcommittee will continue meeting with city experts and other organizations engaged in or supportive of waste reduction programs (e.g. Black Earth Composting, Conservation Law Foundation). The subcommittee will explore effective strategies for reducing waste in Newton, including organics diversion programs (municipal level), user-based pricing (municipal level), Extended Producer Responsibility (state-level), Expanded Bottle Bill (state-level), and sustainable material recovery programs (municipal level and private).

### **Trash Disposal Capacity**

To help understand the future cost trends of trash disposal, this SMMC subcommittee is evaluating the current status and short- and long-term projections of trash disposal capacity (in-state and out-of-state); trash disposal options (including waste-to-energy/incineration, landfill, anaerobic digestion, and composting); and recycling capacity and recyclable markets (in-state, out-of-state, international). These evaluations include estimated financial impacts to municipalities. The subcommittee reviewed a number of MassDEP documents regarding future solid waste capacity and historical disposal trends, plus historical data regarding the City's trash and recycling tonnage.

In 2021, the subcommittee will continue to gather information on issues affecting the capacity and cost of trash disposal such as tipping costs for waste disposal, if known, for the years 2025 and later; the potential for a reduction in in-state waste-to-energy capacity; rail transportation costs for shipping municipal solid waste out-of-state; and the potential for additional organics disposal capacity, in proximity to Newton.

### **Waste Reduction Programs in Other Communities**

In order to achieve the 70% waste reduction goals by 2050, Newton will have to implement novel programs to help divert waste into recycling and food waste composting as well as reduce the overall waste generated. This SMMC subcommittee focuses on identifying waste management best practices and lessons learned from other communities, with an emphasis on curbside composting (to reduce trash volume) and user-based pricing programs (to provide a financial incentive). Municipalities similar in size to Newton and known to have curbside composting and/or user based pricing programs were selected in Massachusetts and California, and detailed information on their trash, recycling and organic composting programs including sizing, frequency, pricing, education, etc. were collected. This subcommittee is focused particularly on these programs as incentives to reduce trash volume and increase diversion of compostable and recyclable materials.

In 2021, this subcommittee will continue to explore additional communities with waste reduction programs in place and identify and evaluate potential program changes for Newton (such as in trash/recycling collection frequency, bin size, expanded user-based incentive program, organics collection, etc.)

## REVIEW OF SMMC GOALS FOR 2020 (from the 2019 Annual Report)

### 1. Long-Term Goals for the City

**Goal:** Initiate the process of proposing sustainable trash/recycling goals for the City to support:

- 5-year and 30-year trash reduction goals for the City.
- 5-Year Sustainable Materials Management (SMM) Strategy by DPW's SMM Division
- Next 5-year trash/recycling hauling and recyclables processing contract (effective 7/1/2025).
- Next trash disposal contract (2028) - current 20-yr contract is with a consortium of 36 communities.

#### **Actions Completed:**

- Evaluated the City's projected trash/recycling needs based on estimated population, household consumption/generation rates, producer packaging changes (Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) mandates), etc.
- Researched trends in future waste disposal options, capacities, and costs with particular attention to the potential impact on the City of Newton.
- Researched trash/recycling practices, strategies, and 'lessons learned' of other MA communities and states.

### 2. Implement Goals

**Goal:** Implement trash reduction and other goals through ordinance/policy changes and education/outreach to residents and businesses.

#### **Actions Completed:**

- Worked with the Director of SMMD to prepare public comments to the MassDEP's *Draft 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan* and to the MassDEP Proposed Waste Ban Amendments (310 CMR 19.000).
- Recommended a list of reuse organizations be included on the SMMD website to facilitate residents' diversion of usable materials from the waste stream.
- Began the discussion of how the Commission and the City might support or advocate for state and national policies on extended producer responsibility (EPR).

## SMMC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2021

### 1. Continue to Define Long-Term Goals for the City

Goal: Continue the process of refining sustainable trash/recycling goals for the City to support:

- 5-year and 30-year trash reduction goals for the City.
- 5-Year Sustainable Materials Management (SMM) Strategy by DPW's SMMD.
- MassDEP Technical Assistance Grant aided data-gathering and preparing a report on recommendations for curbside collection changes (expected mid 2022)
- Next 5-year trash/recycling hauling and recyclables processing contract (effective 7/1/2025).
- Next trash waste-to-energy contract (2028); current 20-yr contract is with a consortium of 36 communities.

#### **Objectives/Methods:**

- Continue to assist with SMMD data collection for the MassDEP assisted curbside collection analysis and report beginning February 2021.
- Continue the evaluation of the City's projected trash/recycling needs based on estimated population, household consumption/generation rates, producer packaging changes such as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) mandates, etc.
- Continue to research trends in future waste disposal options, capacities, and costs with particular attention to the potential impact on the City of Newton.
- Continue to research trash/recycling practices, strategies, and 'lessons learned' of other communities and states (e.g., Cambridge, Brookline, Natick, Boston, Oregon DEQ, Seattle, and others).
- Summarize research into trash/recycling needs, waste disposal trends, and comparative trash/recycling practices with general recommendations for the City of Newton in a report for the Mayor and City Council.
- Identify and evaluate potential curbside collection changes, including cost/benefit, resident feedback, implementability, etc. (e.g., change default trash cart size to MassDEP-recommended 35-gal, annual fee based on variable cart size chosen by resident (Brookline), fee based on amount of trash generated, change trash and/or recycling collection frequency (Hamilton-Wenham, Seattle), incentive-based programs, organic waste collection (Cambridge)).
- Identify and evaluate use of technologies for next hauling contract (e.g., truck cameras to monitor trash dumped in truck, scales on trucks) - for new contract negotiations starting in 2023.
- Identify and evaluate additional policies/methods to achieve trash reduction and other goals (e.g., food waste diversion, textiles, mattresses).

### 2. Facilitate Waste Reduction and Diversion

Goal: Propose trash reduction options and other goals through and education/outreach to residents and businesses.

**Objectives/Methods:**

- Support education/outreach to the City Council and Mayor's Office on the reasons/need for trash reduction (dwindling disposal capacity, increasing disposal costs, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, etc.) and other goals.
- Support materials for education/outreach to residents/businesses on reasons/need for trash reduction (dwindling disposal capacity, increasing disposal costs, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, etc.), proposed implementation strategies (self-directed/consumption-based, and City-directed policy/ordinance), such as Mayor's newsletter, liaisons with the Chamber, Green Newton library talk series, Newton Tab, etc.
- Provide the business community with information and literature on alternatives to black plastic take out containers, which cannot be recycled.
- Advocate for stronger extended producer responsibility (EPR) policies at the state and national level through the adoption of a City resolution on EPR and other measures.
- Make improvements in information access for residents through the SMMD website and the Recycle Right app. Review DPW website content/consistency, check links to outside organizations, evaluate further information needs.
- Develop strategies for increasing composting and composting awareness among residents through home composting, Black Earth subscriptions and the organics drop off program.

Respectfully submitted,

Sunwoo Kahng, Chair, Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission

March, 2021