

**2021 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.

In 2021, the SMMC began with 10 appointed members: Steve Ferrey, Sunwoo Kahng (Chair), Meryl Kessler, John Lewis, Robin Maltz, Seth Parker, Marian Rambelle (Vice Chair), Karen Slote, Miles Smith, and Carl Valente (Secretary). Alan Gordon joined in October and Seth Parker submitted his resignation at the end of December. The SMMC meets monthly through the year, typically on the 4th Thursday at 7pm, and due to governmental restrictions and other issues resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the SMMC continued to conduct meetings online.

In November, the SMMC published its findings from a year long research into residential curbside collection. The report [Setting the Path to Zero Waste: Recommendations on the Future of Residential Curbside Waste Management in Newton](#) details the current status and short- and long-term projections of Newton's trash disposal capacity and options, future needs and trends, and adoptable models from other communities' waste reduction programs. In the report, the SMMC makes 6 recommendations for changes related to waste management in the City that should be made prior to negotiations for 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:

1. Set residential zero waste goals for Newton
2. Implement a citywide curbside organics collection program
3. Incentivize trash reduction with a fee-based variable rate system and/or bi-weekly collection
4. Strengthen support for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation
5. Increase SMMC staffing
6. Develop a comprehensive zero waste plan for the City of Newton

The SMMC report will inform the upcoming SMMC report on curbside services being completed through the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) in-kind technical assistance grant. The SMMC 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.

SMMC met with the Mayor in December to discuss the report, and presentation to the City Council's Public Facilities Committee planned for February 19, 2022. Public presentations were also given at the Newton Free Library (December), and a presentation through the League of Women Voters Newton for February 3, 2022.

*Clarification from the 2020 SMMC Annual Report: The SMMC voted in late 2019 to adopt the waste reduction goal of 70% by 2050 (based on a 2018 baseline). However, due to Covid related disruptions, no formal recommendation was made to the Mayor and City Council. A formal recommendation was made in November 2021 with the release of the SMMC report.*

**REVIEW OF SMMC GOALS FOR 2021**  
(from the 2020 Annual Report)

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

- 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.

**Actions Completed:**

- Completed research and summarized findings on trash/recycling needs, waste disposal trends, and comparative trash/recycling practices in SMMC report
- Made recommendations in SMMC report on adopting waste reduction goals, changes to the residential curbside collection system, adding SMMC staff, and funding for the drafting of a comprehensive zero waste plan prior to new contract negotiations starting in 2023.
- Distributed the SMMC report to the Mayor and the City Council.
- Met with the Mayor and the SMMC director to discuss the findings and recommendations laid out in the SMMC report.
- Presented findings and recommendations laid out in the SMMC report to the general public in a Newton Free Library webinar.

**2. Facilitate Waste Reduction and Diversion**

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

**Actions Completed:**

- Reviewed the Victor Stanley system proposed by the Parks & Recreation Department as a possible alternative to the Big Belly trash and recycling receptacles.
- Recommended stronger extended producer responsibility (EPR) policies at the state and national level through the adoption of a City resolution on EPR and other measures.
- Recommended the passage of the miniature liquor bottle ban in Newton.
- Helped establish the Plastics Reduction Working Group with Councilor Vicki Danberg and other community members to investigate opportunities for reducing single use plastics in Newton food establishments.
- Began research and discussion into organics processing systems that may be successful in Newton.

## SMMC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2022

### 1. Work Toward Achieving Recommendations Set Out in the SMMC Report

Define strategies for achieving the SMMC recommendations:

1. Set residential zero waste goals for Newton
2. Implement a citywide curbside organics collection program
3. Incentivize trash reduction with a fee-based variable rate system and/or bi-weekly collection
4. Strengthen support for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation
5. Increase SMMC staffing
6. Develop a comprehensive zero waste plan for the City of Newton

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

- Continue educational outreach to Mayor, City Council, and the residents about the SMMC report findings and recommendations, including:
  - the adoption of residential waste reduction goals for Newton
  - additional SMMC staffing
  - the development of a comprehensive zero waste plan for Newton
- Identify and evaluate methods of organics diversion and processing that could be successful in Newton.
- Evaluate the scope of a successful comprehensive zero waste plan for Newton.
- Continue to assist with SMMC data collection for the MassDEP assisted curbside collection analysis and report.
- Continue to evaluate trash/recycling practices, strategies, and ‘lessons learned’ of other communities and states to inform future programs in Newton.

### 2. Facilitate Waste Reduction and Diversion

Propose trash reduction options and other goals through education/outreach to Mayor, City Council, residents, and businesses.

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

- Evaluate and recommend potential ordinances to reduce waste in the city.
- Evaluate and recommend additional EPR initiatives in the city and beyond.
- Review and comment on SMMC report on curbside service recommendations
- Develop strategies for increasing composting and composting awareness among residents through home composting, Black Earth subscriptions and the organics drop off program.
- Identify and evaluate additional policies/methods to achieve trash reduction and other goals (e.g., reuse programs, textile collection, mattress recycling).

Respectfully submitted,

Sunwoo Kahng  
Chair, Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission  
March 28, 2022