

2022 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 solid waste collection and disposal in Newton and to monitor and make recommendations regarding the City's activities in these areas. The SMMC works closely with the City of Newton's Sustainable Materials Management Division (SMMD), headed by Director Waneta Trabert.

In 2022, the SMMC began with ten appointed members: Steve Ferrey, Alan Gordon, Sunwoo Kahng (Chair), Meryl Kessler, John Lewis, Robin Maltz, Marian Rambelle (Vice Chair), Karen Slote, Miles Smith, and Carl Valente (Secretary). 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.

Efforts to Achieve the SMMC Report Recommendations

Throughout the year, the SMMC continued to present to a variety of audiences the findings and recommendations of its 2021 report, [Setting the Path to Zero Waste: Recommendations on the Future of Residential Curbside Waste Management in Newton](#):

- On January 19, 2022, Ms. Slote presented the SMMC report to the Newton City Council's Public Facilities Committee. She highlighted the following three priorities recommended in the report:
 - The City should provide funding to prepare a Comprehensive Zero Waste plan;
 - The City should provide funding for additional SMMD staff; and
 - The City should establish specific solid waste reduction goals.
- On February 3, 2022, Ms. Slote presented the SMMC Report members of the public as part of the League of Women Voters of Newton series of talks. The *Boston Globe* published a story on this presentation.
- In February 2022, the SMMC sent letters to the Mayor and City Council formally requesting that \$75,000-\$100,000 of Newton's American Rescue Plan Act ("ARPA") funds be used to hire an outside consultant to develop a Comprehensive Zero Waste Plan for Newton.
- In the April 2022, SMMC members met individually with City Councilors Alicia Bowman and Andreae Downs to discuss the report. Ms. Slote drafted a [two-page flyer](#) summarizing the SMMC report, including its six recommendations, at the suggestion of Councilor Bowman. It was sent to City Council on May 20, 2022.
- In May 2022, SMMC requested that the City Council take up a resolution committing to specific waste reduction goals for residential and municipal waste as outlined in the SMMC Report (see attached). The [City Council passed the resolution](#) on May 24. [Mayor Fuller responded to that resolution](#) saying that the administration would await the SMMD recommendations "in the next few months to help steer the City's path to reduce waste and increase waste diversion. In conjunction with the recommendations of Newton's Sustainable Materials Management Commission in its November 2021 Setting the Path

to Zero Waste report, we look forward to creating, perhaps with the help of a consultant, a comprehensive Sustainable Materials Management Program.”

- On August 25, 2022, the SMMC met in-person with Mayor Fuller to discuss the findings and recommendations of the SMMC Report. At this meeting the mayor committed funding for a consultant to help develop a comprehensive Zero Waste plan and hiring a superintendent for the SMMD to allow the SMMD Director more time for planning and analysis.

The SMMC report also informed the draft SMMD report on curbside services, which was made possible through a Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) in-kind technical assistance grant. The SMMD report is expected to assess curbside collection services and provide recommendations for program changes focused on waste reduction and cost savings. The final report is planned to be released in early 2023.

SMMC Support of Waste Reduction Legislation

- Mr. Gordon and Ms. Kahng worked with Councilor Vicki Danberg to research and draft the Expanded Sustainable Packaging Ordinance, which is expected to be taken up by City Council in early 2023.
- The SMMC provided support to Councilor Alison Leary for the proposed Recycling Mandate and Private Hauler Ordinances, which will be taken up by City Council in early 2023.

Other Work Facilitating Waste Reduction and Diversion

- In May 2022, the SMMC invited Recirclable to talk about their system of reusable takeout containers and management app, and discussed the possibility of expansion into Newton food establishments.
- In November 2022, the SMMC requested and reviewed survey results from Black Earth Composting to better understand how and why subscribers use the service. The survey generated ideas for promoting and expanding the service, some of which will be implemented by Black Earth.

REVIEW OF SMMC GOALS FOR 2022

(from the 2021 Annual Report)

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 SMMD 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 SMMD 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 SMMD 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.

Actions Completed:

- As noted above, the SMMC has engaged in a wide array of activities to promote and publicize the recommendations of the SMMC Report: in-person meetings with the mayor and councilors, presentations to local groups, letters to elected officials, reports in the press.
- The SMMC also successfully advocated for funding for a consultant for a comprehensive Zero Waste plan and provided suggestions to Director Trabert on the scope and content of such a plan.
- The SMMC advocated for more staffing for the SMMD and was successful in getting a position of supervisor for the SMMD created. This will allow more time for the director to work on planning and analysis.
- The SMMC continued to monitor strategies in other municipalities, including curbside organics diversion and restrictions on single-use plastics, that might be adopted 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 SMMD 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).

Actions Completed:

- The SMMC has provided feedback to the Plastics Reduction Working Group on a draft of an expanded City ordinance on reducing single use plastics; several members of the SMMC attend meetings of the working group.
- The SMMC has also provided feedback to Councilor Leary on the draft recycling mandate and private hauler ordinances.
- The SMMC has requested and reviewed survey results from Black Earth Composting to better understand how and why subscribers use the service. The survey generated ideas for promoting and expanding the service.

SMMC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2023

1. Continue to work toward achieving recommendations set out in the SMMC report. Propose trash reduction options and other goals through education/outreach to Mayor, City Council, residents, and businesses.
2. Explore in greater detail how the City might practically implement the SMMC recommendations as we draw closer to the 2025 waste hauler and 2028 disposal contract renewal. Topics might include:
 - a. City-wide curbside organics collection
 - b. Cart size reduction
3. Create greater collaboration between SMMC, Recycling Committee, and various community groups to amplify education and initiatives.
4. Evaluate the recommendations of the SMMD report on curbside services when it is finalized and becomes public in the spring of 2023.
5. Explore expanding the SMMC's advisory capacity to other City departments, in addition to the Department of Public Works.
6. Propose trash reduction options and recycled content goals in the City's procurement and purchasing decisions through revision of the Buy Recycled Policy. Investigate methods to encourage compliance.
7. Encourage the City to join the Government Recycling Demand Champion Program.
8. Explore methods to reduce construction and demolition waste, deconstruction policies, and incorporation of reuse and recycled content into construction.
9. Work with Newton Public Schools to adopt stronger sustainability policy on reducing, reusing, recycling, and composting.
10. Facilitate Waste Reduction and Diversion
 - a. Continue promoting BE program based on results of 2022 survey.
 - b. Support passage of the proposed Expanded Sustainable Packaging Ordinance.
 - c. Support passage of the proposed Private Hauler Ordinance.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sunwoo Kahng
Chair, Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission
April 7, 2023

APPENDIX

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF NEWTON ESTABLISHING ZERO WASTE GOALS FOR 2030 and 2050

WHEREAS, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) has established a waste reduction goal for the state of 30% by 2030 and 90% by 2050 (based on a baseline of 2018); and

WHEREAS, the Newton Sustainable Materials Management Commission's 2021 report on residential curbside waste management recommends that Newton adopt residential waste reductions goals of 25% by 2030 and 70% by 2050 (based on a baseline of 2018); and

WHEREAS, the residential recycling rate for Newton has remained at approximately 35% between 2010-2020 and the rate of trash reduction slowed to 1.7% between 2014-2019,

WHEREAS, Newton experienced an increase of approximately 17% in the Waste Management 5-year trash hauling and disposal contract renewed in 2020; and

WHEREAS, MassDEP projects that landfill space and waste-to-energy capacity in the Northeast will continue to shrink, leading to a further rise in waste disposal costs for the region including the City of Newton; and

WHEREAS, the US EPA has estimated 50% of all greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are caused by the extraction, production, transportation, and use of goods, including food, products and packaging, and that implementation of a zero waste policy minimizes GHG production and therefore supports Newton's Climate Action Plan that pledged to bring the City to carbon neutrality by 2050; and

WHEREAS, Newton sends its trash to the Millbury Wheelabrator Waste to Energy facility (WTE) which emits a steady stream of carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and nitrous oxides into the air even with the best pollution control mechanisms in place; and

WHEREAS, food waste makes up approximately 29% of the waste stream which can readily be diverted through home composting, a curbside pickup service and drop off at the Newton Resource Recovery Center (with additional sites planned); and

WHEREAS, opportunities for further waste reduction through proven reduction, reuse, and expanded recycling programs such as Save Money and Reduce Trash (SMART) are available and utilized in communities across New England; and

WHEREAS, the City of Newton will assume a leadership role by setting zero waste as a goal;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the City of Newton hereby encourages the pursuit of Zero Waste as a long term goal in order to eliminate waste and pollution in the manufacture, transportation, use, storage, and recovery of materials. To be able to measure progress and keep the city accountable, the City hereby sets a residential waste reduction goal of 25% by 2030 and 70% by 2050, with a stretch goal to meet the state goals of 30% by 2030 and 90% by 2050. This goal can be achieved through action plans

and measures that significantly reduce waste and promote reduction, reuse, recycling, and organics diversion; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Newton hereby adopts the concept of Zero Waste as defined by Zero Waste International Alliance as a guiding principle for all municipal operations, outreach, and programs and actions within the community; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in order to achieve the waste reduction goals, the City of Newton shall:

- Consider the adoption of trash reduction measures such as smaller trash carts, bi-weekly trash pickup and a city supported organics collection program;
- Consider additional Sustainable Material Management Division staffing needs to support waste reduction program success;
- Consider novel ordinances to reduce the use of single use items;
- Consider the adoption of a comprehensive Zero Waste Plan as local municipalities including Cambridge and Boston have done; and
- Consider requirements for businesses, nonprofits and residents to divert all organic materials and participate in recycling programs while also encouraging them to reduce and reuse.