

City of Philadelphia Solid Waste and Recycling Advisory Committee (SWRAC)

MEETING MINUTES
November 19, 2020

ATTENDEES

SWRAC Members:

Fern Gookin (Co-Chair), Revolution Recovery
Kelly Offner (Co-Chair), Keep Philadelphia Beautiful
Bob Anderson, Retrievr
Jack Embick, Interested Party
Maurice Sampson II, Clean Water Action
Paul Kohl, Philadelphia Water Department

Others Present:

Adam Hendricks, Philadelphia Water Department
Amy Cornelius, Interested Party
Andy Shea, RNG Energy Solutions
Daniel Lawson, City of Philadelphia – Parks and Rec
Helena Rudoff, City of Philadelphia – Office of Sustainability
Kyle Lewis, City of Philadelphia – Streets Department
Laura Cassidy, City of Philadelphia – Department of Prisons
Maria Horowitz, Philadelphia Water Department
Mike Ewall, Interested Party
Nagiarry Procena-Meneus, City of Philadelphia – Commerce Department
Neil Garry, City of Philadelphia – Streets Department
Peter Karasik, Interested Party
Scott McGrath, City of Philadelphia – Streets Department

Called to order by K. Offner at 3:03pm.

- Motion to begin: Paul Kohl
- 2nd: Bob Anderson

Approval of Minutes from September 17, 2020 SWRAC Meeting.

- Motion to approve: Maurice Sampson
- 2nd: Bob Anderson

State of Recycling – B. Anderson

- Markets are still volatile
- Corrugated is trending up because the supply is down and demand is high
- Mixed paper is also up, supply issue – many communities diverting materials to the landfill, up to \$35/tn
- Commercial volume is still down – affecting corrugated and paper
- HDPE natural one of the strongest in the mix, trading at \$1400/tn, this may have peaked
- HDPE pigmented – a shining star, trading around \$400-420/tn, driven by the fact that virgin pellets are up – not exactly sure why it's gone up from about \$60/tn, but COVID does seem to be affecting the supply/demand

- PET – volatile, demand driven by demand from Mohawk carpet; may pull back with additional COVID restrictions
- Aluminum trading favorably - \$1000/tn, +\$300 if you go direct
- Mixed plastics – flat, \$10-15/tn
- Scott McGrath noted that the City’s rate is back down to \$100/tn, which is a slight improvement
- Municipalities were seeing about a 20% increase during COVID, some municipalities are landfilling more
- Amy Cornelius asked if increased landfilling now is due to a lag from Chinese restrictions? Bob Anderson replied that COVID could be a good excuse for landfilling more if the price is comparable, but the collection infrastructure may be strained because of COVID so their hand is forced even when they don’t want to do it.

Organics Subcommittee Update – P. Kohl

- Reviewed notes from subcommittee meeting on Tuesday 11/10/20; minutes will be posted on the website once approved.
- American Biogas Council meeting was held this morning; Adam Hendricks attended. They are putting together a template policy document that he can circulate to SWRAC. It includes recommendations for legislation, how to target materials, main talking points that can be taken to legislature, etc.

Office of Sustainability – H. Rudoff

- Bennett Compost will be operating at the Rising Sun facility as part of the Urban Composting pilot. They have the keys, but there has been some complications with the permit, which is still on hold. They hope to be operating soon, with pickups starting from participating centers in February 2021.
- In collaboration with NRDC, there will be a study of the composting pickups and food donations from the centers.
- Currently working on a holiday messaging campaign with NRDC around ‘Save the Food’. People are looking to size-down holiday meals this year. The campaign provides some tools and guidance on how to do it. The link to the toolkit will be provided in the chat (below); feel free to help spread the word. They will also will have physical printed materials, let Helena Rudoff know if you want them. Additional messaging campaigns will be coming in the new year
 - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PFA51mMgkJjQjSspLZ5xoxbPgFUfz6O1M7mCUj8DiV0/edit>
- The team is still working to transition Zero Waste and Litter projects to the Office of Sustainability; most of this work will take place by the end of the year.
 - Paul Kohl asked: what does the Zero Waste initiative look like now?
 - The Municipal Building Waste audit has started. Not all buildings are operating the same way during the pandemic. They have started reaching out to gather info: are the contacts the same, what’s the operating status of the properties, etc.
 - Zero Waste Partnership Program is somewhat on hold. Many business partners not operating as they normally would right now, but they did welcome a new partner recently so some people are still interested. Waste360 will be writing a story about the program soon.
 - They are hoping to be able to get an intern to work on data collection

- Haley Jordan is working with commerce on the roll-out of the plastic bag ban. There will be an announcement next month: this will be coming in 2021. On February 1, businesses will be required to place signs at the point of sale for implementation on April 1.
 - Maurice Sampson asked about the discrepancy between the State and City related to the bag ban. Helena Rudoff commented that the City is prepared to fight the pre-emption and move forward. She suggested that people can reach out to Haley Jordan for more specific information.

Philadelphia Recycle Office Update – N. Garry

- Collections are mostly back to normal. They are still having issues with crew members testing positive and/or needing to quarantine. There is still some minimal commingling of recycling in trash trucks. It's hard to plan ahead because staffing may need to be adjusted just before the trucks go out for the day. Individuals can drive directly to the sanitation centers if they are still concerned about their recyclables going into the trash, but it's minimal.
 - Mike Ewall asked: how can a neighborhood know whether their recycling collection in a given week is really going to a MRF or is being trashed? Neil Garry noted that they don't always know ahead of time. If they do, this information can be found on the Streets Twitter account
- DEP Statewide Waste & Recycling Sort: the waste composition audit of the trash side is underway. There are 40+ categories, and they are excited to get the data back, which is expected to help guide organic efforts. The recycling audit was delayed until the spring; they will get that report in the summer.
 - Bob Anderson asked: is there any concern that with everyone being home right now, this will skew the results of the studies? Neil Garry commented that he this will be taken into consideration. The sorts were planned before the pandemic. They received partial funding from the state, and were not able to pick their date. They expect that the data will be different, but it will let us know what 2020 looks like. They will be able to compare pre-pandemic, pandemic and post-pandemic, which could be helpful down the road.
 - Maurice Sampson commented that it all depends on how the data is used. It will be hard to use it for planning because the waste stream will likely change drastically after COVID. Kyle Lewis commented that they will use data to inform messaging.
 - Andy Shea commented that organics has definitely shifted: people are eating more at home and less in restaurants. The shift has been dramatic and new flows will need to be assessed. Is this the new norm? It's hard to know.
 - Paul Kohl asked if we can participate in the sort? Neil Garry said the sort is completely staffed up at the moment.
- Education campaign: Curb Your Waste – postcards came in the mail (or will be coming in the mail soon). They have suggestions of what can go in the waste stream. There will also be an ongoing social media campaign, as needed.
- City Council hearing was held where there was discussion about how the pandemic is affecting litter in the City. A full transcript is available on the City website (link below). There was discussion about challenges and how they are being addressed day-to-day.

- <https://www.transcriptroom.org/tr/CAF/PDFFile/8189423?docType=30>
- Amy Cornelius asked if the Department has heard anything back as a result of the meeting? Scott McGrath said that Council has spoken to the Commissioner, but nothing substantial has happened yet. They are doing an assessment of Operations, and he will share that info with SWRAC when complete.
- Amy Cornelius commented that Councilmember Katherine Gilmore Richardson's office will be putting out a summary of everything they have been working on regarding waste issues. The committee is interested in the circular economy and is looking for input. Kelly Offner suggested that someone from the Commerce Department could be contacted about this for input.
- The EPA is open to receiving comments on a national recycling strategy - <https://www.epa.gov/americanrecycles/us-national-recycling-goal>
 - "On November 16, 2020 at the America Recycles Summit, Administrator Wheeler announced the National Recycling Goal to increase the U.S. recycling rate to 50 percent by 2030. The national goal and associated indicators developed from specific metrics will provide the benchmarks needed to evaluate the success of the collective efforts to significantly improve the nation's recycling system."
 - "EPA is currently accepting comments on the draft National Recycling Strategy through December 4, 2020 in the federal docket. To leave a comment, go to [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) and search for the docket EPA-HQ-OLEM-2020-0462."

Municipal Solid Waste Plan – N. Garry

- The MSW Plan is currently under review.
- The Plan should be submitted to DEP in the next few weeks.

Informational Items, Open Discussion, and Announcements

- Kelly Offner: Is there any guidance we can give on upcoming Christmas tree recycling?
 - Scott McGrath said that they will be taking them at the drop-off centers.
 - Neil Garry said that they will publish a list online about a week before Christmas noting where you can take your tree to be chipped; last year one of the composting companies also provided curbside pick-up service. He noted that if you take your tree to a convenience center it will not go to landfill; if you leave your tree on the curb it will go to landfill.
 - Daniel Lawson added that Parks and Rec is expecting to receive trees from Streets as in the past. Their biggest request is to help with outreach that trees MUST have all ornaments and lights removed before disposal. This is NOT something that will be done at the Organics Recycling Center.
- Maurice Sampson noted that when the Zero Waste and Litter cabinet was disbanded there was some talk about that work coming back to SWRAC. He asked if the SWRAC Goals subcommittee would be revisited? This subcommittee was meeting in 2017 but was put on hold because ZWL cabinet was established. The Goals subcommittee was looking at year-to-year goals and not just 2035 goals. He suggested that that subcommittee reconvenes.
 - Scott McGrath commented that he thinks this would be appropriate to start having these discussions again.

- Helena Rudoff said they will be looking at this again to see how this fits in their work in the Office of Sustainability. They are mostly looking at waste as related to carbon emissions. She sees benefit in reconvening the SWRAC Goals subcommittee to collaborate.
- Scott McGrath added that he will share the new Office of Sustainability Climate Action Playbook, which has some strategic goals in it including a section on waste. The document is still being finalized and will be shared when complete.
- Jack Embick added that in 2017, Streets seemed receptive to a year-by-year approach to goals, which allowed for manageable achievements. Revisiting these discussions and the thought process could be beneficial to Streets.
- Maurice Sampson can pull together sets of notes from the subcommittee's last meetings and will give to the SWRAC Co-chairs as a next step. Then there can be a discussion about how to move forward.
- Paul Kohl commented that he thinks this is a good idea. In general, he supports the Office of Sustainability working cross-departmentally and taking the lead.

Called to close by K. Offner at 4:36pm

- Motion to adjourn Paul Kohl
- 2nd: Maurice Sampson

Next Meeting no date set yet, but will get dates out for 2021 soon. Will be in Jan 2021.