

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

MEETING MINUTES
September 17, 2020

ATTENDEES

SWRAC Members:

Fern Gookin (Co-Chair), Revolution Recovery
Kelly Offner (Co-Chair), Keep Philadelphia Beautiful
Chuck Raudenbush, Waste Management
Maurice Sampson II, Clean Water Action
Paul Kohl, Philadelphia Water Department
Kyle Lewis, City of Philadelphia – Streets Department

Others Present:

Adam Hendricks, Philadelphia Water Department
Alisa Shargorodsky, EcoSystems Consulting
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
Laura Cassidy, City of Philadelphia – Department of Prisons
Logan Welde, Clean Air Council
Maria Horowitz, Philadelphia Water Department
Mike Ewall, Energy Justice 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
Tamika Davis, PHL Airport
Winnie Branton, Pennsylvania Resources Council

Called to order by K. Offner at 3:04pm.

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

Approval of Minutes from July 23, 2020 SWRAC Meeting.

- Motion to approve: Maurice Sampson
- 2nd: Chuck Raudenbush

State of Recycling – S. McGrath

- Markets haven't changed substantially over the summer
- Prices for aluminum, HDPE, PET continue to be depressed
- Natural HDPE (milk jugs) prices continue to be high
- Cardboard is down a bit but still strong
- Mixed paper – still not real high but in a positive range
- Prices for the last few months have bounced up and down a bit but there haven't been any big changes in the market place

- COVID has impacted the plastics market substantially
- Cardboard has been the backbone of the pricing for the last few months
- Still paying \$104-105/ton for recycling materials
- Logan Welde asked how COVID has impacted plastics? Scott McGrath replied that plastics follow the price of oil, oil prices have been down so recycled plastic prices have dropped as well because they are competing with the raw oil price
- Logan Welde asked about cardboard: has the lag in recycling pick-ups in the City impacted pricing? Scott McGrath replied, no – there is more demand for cardboard right now with the online shopping, which impacts the pricing. Rain (wet cardboard) does impact how much recyclable cardboard is sent to Waste Management’s facility but recycling pick-ups are expected to improve in the next few weeks

Organics Subcommittee Update – P. Kohl

- Reviewed notes from subcommittee meeting on Wednesday 9/9/20; minutes will be posted on the website once approved.
- Amy Cornelius asked for clarification: what needs to change in the permit to allow food waste to be able to come to PWD? Paul Kohl replied, any time there is a proposed change from the permit, a request must be sent to the State. Sometimes there are questions that need to be answered before the change is permitted. For example, PWD and PHL Airport wanted to allow de-icing material to go into PWD process; it was advantageous to both Departments to work together. Before de-icing material could be put into the PWD system, they had to prove it wouldn’t negatively impact the process. Something similar must be done to allow the food waste to go into the process.

Office of Sustainability – Zero Waste Updates – H. Rudoff

- The City put out a press release on the NRDC initiative last week. (Links included below.) The press release announced the collaboration and receipt of a grant that will fund two separate food waste projects over the next few years. They are still discussing strategies for grant. One idea is to work with Parks and Recreation to look at the food waste process from collection points to the Bennett facility and then as compost.
 - USDA press release <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2020/08/25/usda-announces-first-ever-recipients-urban-agriculture-grants-and>
 - Press release from the City announcing NRDC collaboration and USDA grant <https://www.phila.gov/2020-09-10-city-receives-funding-and-technical-assistance-to-tackle-food-waste-citywide/>
- Some people asked to join this group, please send Helena an email directly so your email can be included on the meeting invites Helena.Rudoff@phila.gov

Philadelphia Recycle Office Update – K. Lewis

- Collections:
 - Collections in the City are caught up now but they are still working on getting back to a regular collection pattern and schedule. They are also returning to separated recycling and trash in all Districts

- During the pandemic, they have been a 7 day per week operation, but they are caught up and won't be working this weekend
- Recommending that if people want to make sure their recyclables are being recycled, take them to a sanitation convenience center. The number of patrons at the convenience centers and the volume has increased
- Here are some things that the Streets Department has done in response:
 - Hired additional workers (trash is up 30%, this adds an additional 1.5 days of work per week)
 - Implemented 'Curb Your Waste' program
 - Residents are also responding by going to sanitation convenience centers
 - Prioritizing getting trash collected first
- Paul Kohl asked: what is the impact on the recycling numbers? Kyle Lewis responded that the recycling numbers have gone down because the materials were commingled for a period of time
- Maurice Sampson asked: are trash and recyclables being commingled everywhere? Kyle Lewis replied, no. There are 6 sanitation districts. What's happening in each district depends on how many recycling trucks and other resources are available in the district at that time of collection.
- Maurice Sampson asked: who wrote this specific announcement (image was shared through this link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1y63c2l23TeS-QHxFiBl18roS7tEeueCI/view>)? He commented that the messaging has been confusing for residents; people are having a hard time understanding what's going on. Kyle Lewis agreed that there is a lot of work that will need to be done to rebuild the messaging.
- Maurice Sampson recommended that the message should be that the only recycling being done will happen if you take your recyclables to the convenience centers and the priority is picking up trash right now. People will respond to transparency and clear information.
- Winnie Branton commented that the convenience centers are well operated and an effective way to recycle
- Logan Welde shared this article related to the plastic industry: posted an article related to the plastic industry https://www.npr.org/2020/09/11/897692090/how-big-oil-misled-the-public-into-believing-plastic-would-be-recycled?utm_campaign=storyshare&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=social&fbclid=IwAR3zMaACu2ceEyLNq80mVQPOXUIQswEToleagR_eKzH2yJgus7eZzBnHuCc He commented that we cannot collect our way out of this issue. He asked if there are alternatives to collecting and if City Council members have been asking for suggestions? Scott McGrath replied that they have started looking at other waste reduction strategies, making people more conscious of the waste being generated and how it is disposed. Kyle Lewis replied that the Streets Department has been thinking about this before her start; reduction strategies have been part of the conversations though have not specifically been requested by a council person. She mentioned the Recycling Partnership study that is underway, which will be looking at this more comprehensively. It was on schedule to start this fall, but it has been pushed back to the spring.

- Kyle Lewis noted that the Streets Department is working really hard – long days and long hours – and acknowledged that there are still challenges.
- DEP Statewide Waste & Recycling Sort
 - The sort is done every 10 years, and will be happening soon.
 - They will be doing quarterly sorts – everyone is invited to volunteer! The sort helps out Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania.
 - It's an eye opening experience. Volunteers will get a first-hand look at how much trash is going into recycling and how much recycling into the trash.
 - Looking to schedule the first sort in October. More information and a request for volunteers will be sent out to the group soon.

Municipal Solid Waste Plan – K. Lewis

- Received questions from Amy Cornelius and Maurice Sampson – thank you!
- Comment period is closed, Q&A is being integrated into the larger report
- Interim report was submitted to DEP and will be fully submitted in the coming weeks

Informational Items, Open Discussion, and Announcements

- Paul Kohl asked for any update from Andy Shea on the RNG Energy project. Andy Shea said that Hilco has been jumping through hoops to move their project along. RNG has been in active negotiations regarding a parcel on the north yard. This presents a potential conflict because Hilco wants to develop from the north to the south. They are still discussing the possibility of re-siting the project.
- Winnie Branton noted that the Pennsylvania Resources Council (PRC) is going to be posting a job description for hiring an Executive Director soon. She asked the group to please share the posting once it comes out. PRC will also be hosting an environmental film festival, which includes local and national films about the environment. More information can be found at www.prc.org
- Alisa Shargorodsky asked if Plastics #1, 2 and 5 were still being collected for recycling? Kyle Lewis responded yes.
- Kyle Lewis noted that the Streets Department is in the process of migrating the website. In this process, she will make sure the current minutes are posted.
- Paul Kohl recommended the Streets Department take the opportunity during the website refresh to post the food waste disposer information again, since the work was already done and is still relevant.

Called to close by K. Offner at 4:19pm

- Motion to adjourn Kyle Lewis
- 2nd: Paul Kohl

Next Meeting 11/19/20