

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

DATE: June 23, 2016

ATTENDEES:

SWRAC Members

Michelle Feldman, Keep Philadelphia Beautiful (co-chair)
Fern Gookin, Revolution Recovery (co-chair)
Bob Anderson, ReCommunity Recycling
Jack Embick, Environmental Law
Scott McGrath, Director of Environmental Services, Streets Dept.
Denis Murphy, Commerce Department
Charles Raudenbush, Waste Management
Andrew Sharp, Office of Sustainability
Maurice Sampson, Niche Recycling
Vivian Van Story, Community Land Trust Corp.

Others Present

Adam Hendricks, Philadelphia Water Dept.
Laura Cassidy, Philadelphia Prisons System
Sara King, University of Pennsylvania

City Staff/Consultants

Tamyra Harris, Streets Dept.
Maria Vamvakidou, Streets Dept.
Marisa Lau, Streets Dept./Recycling Office
Allison Sands, Recycling Office/Recyclebank
Jim Osborn, ARI

Call to order/introductions:

The meeting was called to order by SWRAC co-chairs Michelle Feldman and Fern Gookin at approximately 3:10 p.m.

Minutes:

Meeting minutes from the May SWRAC meeting were approved by voice vote. Meeting summaries from the Oct 2015 and May 2015 SWARC meetings were also approved.

Organics Subcommittee Report (Adam Hendricks):

- A summary describing food waste legislation action was provided to the subcommittee. Updates were given on a new proposed bill in the state of Maine that would require food waste recycling, and a new reintroduced bill in the state of New Jersey.

- Legislation at the city level has not progressed as much as state legislation over the last year. However, NYC has, by regulation, shortened the list of regulated generators who must comply with the food waste legislation. They have the option to continually revise these regulations based on perceived capacity and cost assessments. A capacity assessment for NYC was briefly discussed, with a link to the study to be included in subcommittee minutes.
- Mr. Kohl and Mr. Hendricks then provided updates and responded to questions regarding Toronto's Disco Road facility. These addressed processing capacity, alternative energy products, and drivers for the technological investment.
- Next subcommittee meeting is scheduled for August 23.

Commodities Update (Scott McGrath):

- The price that the City pays to process and market the recyclables it collects decreased from \$30 to \$23 per ton since the previous month, indicating that commodities prices may be improving. Paper mills are purchasing material in preparation for the holiday season, giving a boost to that market.
- Members discussed the possible implications of the soda tax for recycling. A drop in consumer purchasing could have an impact on the recycling stream. Mr. Sharp reported that the Sustainability Office has not researched this yet. Meanwhile, the recycling stream is continuing to evolve consistent with national trends. The recycling sort from spring 2016 confirmed that amounts of paper and glass are continuing to decrease, while plastics and cardboard are increasing. However, these changes were not as dramatic as in the last study.

Solid Waste Plan Update (S. McGrath/J. Osborn):

- Written comments from the SWRAC have been received. Comments focused on technical corrections about the City's biosolids management, its anaerobic digestion facilities, and Waste Management's SpecFUEL waste processing facility. A revised draft of the plan will be released in early July.
- Additional comments on the draft plan were given at the meeting.
 - Mr. Embick was concerned about the lack of mention of metrics and goals. He noted that this subcommittee has not met since February, and little progress has been made since then towards setting a zero waste goal. A more robust description of what we intend to do is needed in the plan.
 - Mr. Sampson noted that many references are made to the new sustainability plan and asked for an update on its timeline for completion. He also expressed concern for how the organics feasibility study is represented, then asked for clarification about the objectives of the study and how results will guide the development of a zero waste strategy. Lastly, he suggested that descriptions of the commercial waste stream failed to capture the inherent difficulty of tracking what are essentially multiple waste streams that would be best examined sector-by-sector.

- Mr. McGrath noted that several areas in the plan could be strengthened by:
 - Additional language of what we aim to achieve by setting a solid waste goal for the City, clarifying our intention to use the results of the organics feasibility study to shape a pragmatic strategy to get to zero waste;
 - Indicating that the organics feasibility study will identify barriers to the development of an organics market in Philadelphia, and how these can be overcome, and;
 - Acknowledging a lack of available information about the commercial waste sector.
- Mr. McGrath added that the Department received preliminary approval from PA DEP to apply for a grant to conduct a new waste characterization study, which will support efforts to understand barriers to organics recovery. The application will be submitted in coming weeks.
- SWRAC may want to convene a stakeholder discussion about a coordinated approach to tracking commercial waste.
- Mr. Sharp confirmed that the City's new sustainability plan is due for release in fall 2016. It will incorporate stakeholder feedback received in engagement sessions that recently concluded. Staff has been using this feedback as a basis for discussions with City departments. In addition, staff will take SWRAC and subcommittee discussions into account. Sustainability topics to be included have been identified, and will encompass long-range planning issues requiring systemic changes. The ways in which other cities are measuring their progress towards sustainability have been reviewed, and several possibilities for metrics to use are being considered.

Informational Items and Announcements:

- *No July Meeting* – see everyone in August!
- *Recycling Coordinator Search* – Mr. McGrath announced that the Department has identified five prospective candidates who will be invited to interview in coming weeks. Andrew Sharp will be the SWRAC representative on the interview panel.
- *Legislative e-Waste Recycling Update* – Mr. Raudenbush gave an overview of PROP's advocacy work to address the problems created by the CDRA (Act 108 of 2010). PROP opposes amendment HB 1900 because it will not ensure a sustainable solution for the PA e-waste recycling industry. The rising cost of recycling electronics is making it harder for everyone—from consumers, to counties, to haulers and processors—to fulfill the requirements of CDRA. A comprehensive solution is desperately needed, but HB 1900 does not go far enough. PROP and other organizations calling for legislators to rethink the amendment have come up with an alternative proposal that has broad support. It will be introduced in the legislature shortly. For those interested in supporting PROP's efforts, this website created by Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful has sample language to use, including a draft letter: <http://ewastepa.org/contact-your-legislator/>

- Mr. McGrath noted that consumers want to update to the newest technology for TVs, especially, and the EPA has calculated that the amount of electronics in the waste stream will not drop off for at least a decade. The City collected 1.3 million pounds of e-waste IN FY16. Mr. Sampson and Ms. Feldman agreed to explore the possibility of having someone present on this topic at a future SWRAC meeting.

- *GreenFutures Recycling Presentations* – Ms. Feldman announced that initial results of the School District’s recycling outreach will be released in August. The School District, Recyclebank and Keep Philadelphia Beautiful have new data available on the student population reached through recycling presentations at schools participating in the pilot. The partners will use the data to brainstorm and look to implement ways to improve the student presentations, in order to make sure that teachers are equipped to help students take what they learned and apply it towards environmental and civic action when recycling is expanded to all schools this fall. Ms. Sands also noted that the School District recently awarded a contract to the hauler J.P. Mascaro & Sons.

- *KPB Microgrant Awardees* – Ms. Feldman announced that the following four community-based organizations will receive seed funding for litter prevention and abatement efforts through Keep Philadelphia Beautiful's microgrant program: Chinatown Community Development Corporation, Hunting Park United, New Kensington CDC and the Passyunk Square Civic Association.

- *Other announcements* – Mr. Sharp had two items of interest. Parks and Recreation will be expanding their recycling pilot program. They have been offering recycling, primarily indoors, at a few locations, and now plan to roll out recycling at their facilities citywide. The Office of Sustainability has purchased recycling bins to support this initiative. Also, Councilman Squilla is holding a hearing on the feasibility of adding polystyrene to the City’s recycling stream this fall. This is likely due to efforts made by DART to head off any citywide ban.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:15 pm.