

Solid Waste Advisory Committee Meeting

9/13/23

4:30 PM

Members:

Chair: Councilor Keith Nyhan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Councilor Karen McNamara	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Councilor Gail Matson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Councilor Brent Todd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Councilor Paula McLaughlin	<input type="checkbox"/>
Councilor Zandra Rice Hawkins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Eric Steinhauser	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reagan Bissonnette	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Judith Kurtz	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Carol Foss	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Chairman Nyhan called the meeting to order at 4:35 noting that a quorum was present and that a few members had noted that they needed to leave at 6:00pm.

The first item on the agenda was the approval of the 7/18/2023 minutes. Councilor Todd made a motion and Councilor Matson seconded. The minutes passed unanimously.

Chairman Nyhan then asked GSD Staff, Adam Clark, for an overview of the evening. Mr. Clark shared that in line with the Committee's interest and direction, this meeting would involve discussion and presentations on food waste diversion options for residents. The Committee has been working through a number of technical and financial matters and these topics have been burgeoning and we are happy to have an opportunity to finally dive in.

Two presenters were present for the meeting Lou Saviano from Renewal Compost and Conor Miller from Black Earth Compost.

Mr. Clark also shared that he had handed the Committee two documents, an info sheet about backyard compost bins that the City sells for cost to residents and a brochure that the City of Manchester put together for residents promoting companies that offer food waste diversion opportunities in that market.

The first presentation of the evening was from Conor Miller of Black Earth. Mr. Miller detailed his company's background including that he began as a commercial compost hauling company and pivoted to include residential collection as demand increased. He spoke about the need for density in residential compost collection program subscriptions to make a project financially feasible. Black Earth does not presently work in Concord but would be happy to participate in these conversations as there may be an opportunity for a pilot project down the line and he has much to share in terms of experience.

In his presentation, Mr. Miller discussed that as demand and density grow, the price point that consumers pay for the service can decrease. Options for collection can vary 1x/week or every two weeks depending. Cornstarch bags are used in plastic buckets to collect the compost.

Discussion pivoted to compost facility requirements as Black Earth does operate compost yards for municipal composting programs in the Massachusetts market. He believes sites should generally be 2 acres at least and some hundreds of yards from neighbors as odors can be a problem including for downslope neighbors. He lets the compost begin the process in a structure so as to help mitigate issues in the first to weeks of the decomposition process.

Mr. Miller advised that as he sees it, schools are a perfect place for a municipality to start composting efforts in a community. They have large volumes of food waste, it is a learning opportunity, there is often enthusiasm particularly at the elementary school level.

Committee member Judith Kurtz added that it is also good as schools contribute to good habit-forming behaviors.

Committee Member Reagan Bissonnette shared that in her work, they had found that food waste levels were highest at elementary schools.

In a question from the public, Mr. Miller went into detail on the form of composting they use at Black Earth being aerated static piles.

In his work, Mr. Miller found 47% of MSW could be composted.

Councilor Rice-Hawkins indicated there would be significant savings to the City if residents were to make significant dents in food waste diversion.

Louis Saviano of Renewal Composting then started his presentation. Mr. Saviano shared that his company is presently working in the market with a number of individual residential compost customers as well as a program through the Concord Coop whereby residents bring their materials there. He services a number of local municipalities and including a new program in Bow where totes are set at the old fire station.

Mr. Saviano gave the history of his starting the company. Mr. Saviano also shared that he is now in partnership with a number of restaurants locally as well as the Grappone Conference Center to divert food waste.

Renewal Compost has also had positive experiences doing food waste diversion pilot programs in schools including with the schools in Bedford.

Mr. Saviano detailed that like Mr. Miller described residents can reach out to sign up for subscription service.

Following the presentations, the committee discussed a number of ideas, they also thanked the guest speakers, indicating they were very impressed with both gentlemen's businesses and a lot of good information was shared.

Ideas included somehow getting the information leaned to the Chamber of Commerce, the school district and parent groups, possibilities for "ward totes" if community groups were to get involved. Further contemplation will need to occur and the committee will circle back on this matter.

Reagan Bissonnette shared with the speakers to be on the lookout for information on federal grants that will be available to municipalities and businesses, much of it devoted to targeting food waste diversion programs. She also shared she has backward composted for years with no vermin issues ever.

Councilor Todd reiterated the potential savings if 47% of MSW were diverted to compost opportunities, recognizing potential collection costs.

The meeting then moved to a brief update on outreach ideas. Angelina Zulkic shared continuing updates that she has been putting out on the Department's social media channels and website.

Work continues on brainstorming what an eventual diversion focused website will look like. Staff will follow IT and Administrative directives and present work concepts to the committee before publishing.

Staff may be able to use future water bill messaging for diversion messaging as well.

Further updates will be forthcoming to flush out the outline presented last meeting as planning efforts are undertaken around the automated collection transition.

Staff expects more information on that front in the next month or two.

The committee thanked everyone for a great meeting and will look forward to continued conversation, updates, and information on textile recycling at the next SWAC meeting to be schedule in the next 5 weeks or so.

The meeting was adjourned.