

Wednesday, February 7, 2024, 5:30 – 7:30pm
MEETING NOTES

SWAC MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Amy Maron, Chair Robin Barr, Vice Chair	Troy Cavell Carol Jones Fred Kranz Chaz Miller Oladapo Awe Pradip Mukerjee Barry Shanoff Michelle Ennis Dawn Selis	Mark Symborski (M-NCPPC rep, non-voting)
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SWAC MEMBERS ABSENT: Adam Diamond, Heidi Lovett

DEP STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:

Eileen Kao, RRMD, Chief, Waste Reduction and Recycling Section
David Frank, RRMD Waste Reduction and Recycling Section
Lisa Shine, RRMD Executive Administrative Aide
Ruth Carbonell, RRMD, Multi-Family Recycling Program Manager, Waste Reduction and Recycling Section
Sarah Mueller, RRMD, Non-Residential Business Recycling Program Manager, Waste Reduction and Recycling Section
Alan Pultyniewicz, RRMD, Recycling Coordinator, Waste Reduction and Recycling Section

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: None

The meeting began at 5:35pm. New and returning members of SWAC were asked to introduce themselves. The new members are: Oladapo Awe, a representative of the business community, who works for United Technologies; Pradip (Peter) Mukerjee, a member of the public and a retired engineer; Barry Shanoff, a member of the public, and a retired environmental attorney; Michelle Ennis, a representative from the solid waste industry, who works for Titus Trash (owned by her family) and owns a convenience store; Dawn Selis, member of the solid waste industry, who co-owns Georgetown Paper Stock.

Featured Discussion: Presentation by RRMD Waste Reduction and Recycling Section Staff on Recycling Outreach and Education for Residents, Multi-Family Properties and Businesses

Eileen Kao presented an overview of Montgomery County’s recycling program and outreach and educational efforts in the different sectors. The county consists of 220,000 single-family (SF) households; about 742 multi-family (MF) properties with about 147,000 dwelling units; 33,000 businesses with about 542,000 employees. More than 1.5 million residents and employees live or work in the county. In calendar year 2021, 474,485 tons of materials were recycled – a 52.1% recycling rate and a 57.1% diversion rate. 910,927 tons of waste was generated that year (44% from commercial sector; 44% from SF; 12% MF). By sector, the recycling rates are: 48% SF; 21% MF; 65% commercial (rounded up).

Alan Pultyniewicz, Recycling Coordinator, presented an overview of outreach and education efforts to increase recycling and waste reduction. The program is comprehensive, focusing on technical assistance, information, education and training on waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and buying recycled products. A variety of techniques are used. Research shows that education must be provided continually to just

maintain awareness and optimal behavior. Montgomery County is a vibrantly diverse community. Programs must be accessible and equitable to everyone. Campaigns are focused and include Recycle Right, Reduce, Risk for Trash Fires, and Reduce Wasted Food. Tools include printed materials, emails/newsletters, social media posts, appearances at events and educational opportunities, and broad-based multi-media education. Examples of each of the different approaches was presented.

Sarah Mueller, Non-Residential/Business Recycling Program Manager said that her team consists of five recycling program education specialists. The goal is 45 site visits per week per specialist. In FY 2023, they conducted 6,619 site visits—a 110% increase from FY 2022 visits (which had been affected by Covid). In FY23, they conducted or attended 80 events and interacted with 8,325 people. They provided 19 janitorial trainings and trained about 297 staff in English and Spanish in FY2022. Five janitorial service provider companies are now certified by the Section. Examples of literature, signage and bins were provided. The section also holds educational seminars and webinars. 110 people attended these sessions in FY23. About 1,000 businesses submitted annual recycling and waste reduction reports in FY23. About 33,000 businesses are mailed annual “recycle right” educational and instructional materials in English, Spanish and Mandarin. The SORRT Network e-Newsletters are sent quarterly. Recycling awards are presented during Recycling Awareness Week as well as at school assemblies to highlight the importance of recycling. There is also a school poster contest. The SORRT Revamped Recycling Strategy Project focuses on 615 low performers with recycling rates below 50%. There is also a multi-media campaign targeting businesses online, on the radio, television and on buses and bus shelters.

Ruth Carbonell, Multi-Family Recycling Program Manager, said that her team consists of two specialists (job titles are I and II). The goal is to conduct 35 site visits per week per specialist I, and 20 site visits per specialist II. They conducted 2,653 site visits in FY23, a 150% increase from FY22. The section conducted 47 educational events and interacted with 1,364 residents and staff. Events range from educational presentations, displays, door-to-door outreach, seminars/webinars, and Earth Day and America Recycles Day events. Virtual and in-person training is conducted by bilingual trainers. They also work with “green team” committees. In FY23, 13,000 recycling blue bins and 70 “slim jim” containers were provided to MF properties. 730 MF properties submitted reports in FY23. Data are used to estimate recycling rates and to identify areas for improvement. Outreach materials were sent to about 145,000 units. Content has been translated into Spanish, French, Amharic, and Mandarin.

Questions and Answers

Q: In the [MDE Waste Reduction and Resource Recovery Plan Goals and Metrics Recommendations April 2019](#) documents, the goals include achieving a 55% recycling rate overall, and reducing waste per capita 10% to 5.5 pounds per person/day. How are we doing?

A: We are benchmarking against previous years very well. We are also doing as well as King County, Washington (home of Seattle) which is one of the best at recycling. It is difficult to get MF recycling rates up across the country. The U.S. SF recycling rate is only 21 percent.

Q: How do you collect the data to know what a property’s recycling rate is in order to focus on low performers?

A: We use the annual reports they submit. Every annual report is field verified by one of our education specialists.

Q: What percentage of commercial properties are visited?

A: We visited about 10,000 businesses per year pre-Covid and our goal is 45 visits per week, but keep in mind that there are 42 different land uses in the county and businesses are diverse.

Q: What are the areas of focus for recycling right?

A: We focus on best practices and have new types of materials being targeted including electronics, durable medical equipment, and mattresses.

Q: Is there a problem in Wheaton with contamination of public recycling bins?

A: We are not getting negative feedback from the downtown business district about any recycling contamination. Specially designed lids keep trash out of these bins.

Q: Where can we subscribe to the recycling newsletter?

A: Alan provided a link. <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/sws/programs/civic-loop.html>.

Q: Where does RRM advertise on social media and why is X (formerly Twitter) still being used?

A: We follow the advice of our public education specialists who still recommend using X.

Q: How can we get the most recent copy of what types of plastic can be recycled.

A: Alan provided a link.

<https://montgomerycountymd.gov/sws/Resources/Files/recycling/plastics-recycling-fact-sheet.pdf>.

Educational materials can also be ordered through the Recycling and Resource Management Store on the montgomerycountymd.gov website.

Q: Are the blue recycling bins free?

A: They are provided at no additional cost to our community members.

Q: What kinds of food scraps recycling education is provided?

A: We have events, webinars, seminars, educational materials, and more.

Q: How do you select recycling awardees?

A: We identify specific properties that reach out to us as well as using reported data.

Other RRM Updates

David Frank provided an update on the DEP website. He said that the revised website is due to go live during the first week of March.

SWAC Updates

Amy described the different subcommittees (Strategic planning/budget; Organics; Consolidation of Subdistricts A&B; Public education & Outreach) and sought volunteers to serve on them. She will follow up with new members to find out what interests them.

We did not have a quorum at the beginning of the meeting to approve the January minutes.

Meeting Adjourned 7:35 pm.

ACRONYMS

C&D Construction and Demolition
CC County Council
CE County Executive
CNG Compressed Natural Gas
CPI Consumer Price Index
CY Calendar Year

DAFIG Dickerson Area Facilities Implementation Group
DEP Department of Environmental Protection
EPA U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
FTE Full Time Employee
FY Fiscal Year

MDE Maryland Department of the Environment
MC Montgomery County
MES Maryland Environmental Services
MF Multi-Family
MRF Materials Recovery Facility
MML Maryland Municipal League
MCPS Montgomery County Public Schools
OLO Office of Legislative Oversight
PAYT Pay-As-You-Throw
RRF Resource Recovery Facility
RRMD Recycling & Resource Management Division
SA Service Area for County collection
SAYT Save-As-You-Throw
SCA Sugarloaf Community Association
SF Single family
SWAC Solid Waste Advisory Committee
SWMP Solid Waste Management Plan
T&E Transportation and Environment Committee
TPD Tons per Day
TPW Tons per Week
ZWTF Zero Waste Task Force