

Aiming for Zero Waste Task Force

April 2, 2020

Meeting via Skype

Agenda

Approve minutes from last meetings

Discuss achievable recycling & organic diversion goal

Discuss priorities for increasing recycling and organics diversion

Public comment

Priorities to Increase Recycling & Organics Diversion

What is an achievable recycling & organic diversion goal?

Source reduction

Physical infrastructure: MRF & Organics

“People” infrastructure:

- PAYT
- Subdistrict B
- enforcement & education

What recycling & organics recovery rate can Montgomery County achieve?

What is an achievable goal?

- Recycling and organics recovery rate is defined as the percentage of the sum of material recycled and sent to an organics processing facility plus the material sent to disposal. E.g., 60 tons recycled or recovered as organics plus 40 tons sent to disposal = 100 tons and is a 60 percent recycling and organics recovery rate.

Recommendation: each Task Force member will be asked for a specific percentage or a range and why it is achievable.

Source Reduction

The Draft of Task Nine listed a number of source reduction activities at the top of the timeline (see Figure 2-1, page 3 of the Draft Task Nine). These include a food waste reduction campaign, a ReUse center and several other options.

Recommendation: Montgomery County should proceed with its source reduction planning and implementation efforts. These efforts will lower the size of the waste stream while increasing awareness of the importance of creating less waste.

Address Processing Facility (MRF) Needs

The existing MRF is 20 years old and out-of-date. It could be retrofitted or replaced by a new facility. Failure to take action will jeopardize the County's recycling programs.

Recommendation: Addressing MRF needs is a critical priority. County staff should determine which option is best in terms of cost and timing. The County Council and Executive must make this facility a priority.

Organics

Organics recovery, with an emphasis on food waste, is essential for decreasing disposal. Both mandatory residential & commercial food waste separation requirements are necessary as is processing capacity. The proposed budget includes funding for both commercial and residential organics recovery pilots.

Recommendation: The County Council should fund the pilot programs. It should require mandatory residential and commercial organics separation while ensuring a processing infrastructure is being developed. These steps can be taken in parallel with the pilot program.

Pay-As-You-Throw

“Pay-as-you-throw” payment systems have proven effective in increasing recycling and organics recovery and reducing the amount of material sent to disposal. This will require modifications to Montgomery County’s existing Solid Waste Fee. That fee can continue to provide a financially secure base for fixed costs while also requiring generators to pay variable fees that reflect the amount of material disposed. Making this change will require a study of how to create a new system that will both encourage more recovery and less waste while preserving the county’s ability to have a financially secure base.

Recommendation: Montgomery County should institute a pay-as-you-throw system as part of the Solid Waste Fee.

Subdistrict B

A majority of Montgomery County residents now live in Subdistrict B. Failure to have a unified waste and recycling collection system hampers overall progress toward zero waste goals.

Recommendation: Montgomery County should consolidate Subdistrict B with Subdistrict A in order to have a uniform waste and recycling system in the county that optimizes recovery potential.

Education & enforcement

Education and enforcement are crucial to increasing participation and lowering contamination. The County has completed an enforcement pilot program with positive results.

Recommendation: Montgomery County should expand its enforcement efforts based on the results of the pilot program. This will include additional FTEs to aid in enforcement. The County needs to continue to update and expand its education efforts to ensure that all county residents can recycle right. In addition, the County should explore efforts to work with NGOs and other groups to enhance recycling education efforts.