

MONTGOMERY COUNTY SOLID WASTE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, September 21, 2024 – 5:30 – 7:30pm

MEETING NOTES

SWAC members in attendance:

Amy Maron, Chair	Oladapo Awe
Robin Barr, Vice Chair	Troy Cavell
Kavita Battula, Secretary	Fred Kranz
Chaz Miller	Carol Jones

SWAC Members absent: Pradip (Peter) Mukerjee, Dawn Selis, Michelle Ennis, Adam Diamond, Heidi Lovett

DEP Officials in attendance:

Jeffrey Camera, Section Chief, RRMD

Lisa Shine, Executive Administrative Assistant to the RRMD Division Director

David Frank, Technical Liaison to SWAC

Cindy Pena, DEP, Public Affairs

Maryland Environmental Services Officials in Attendance

Tim Ford, Managing Director, Environmental Operations

Angie Webb, Recycling Markets

Members of the public in attendance: David Rosenbaum, Elisabeth Fiidler, Alan van Order

Presentation by Angie Webb- Maryland Environmental Services on dual stream recycling program in Montgomery County

Dual stream recycling program--- separate bins for fiber, commingled plastic/aluminum/glass

Single stream—all materials put in one bin, sorted at MRF—less clean material

MoCo- program serves all county residents, processes 5,200 tons a month. About 3,000 tons of fiber/month, 2,200 tons of commingled.

64,000 tons in last fiscal year went to MRF—35,000 tons of fiber, 28,300 tons--- commingled materials---56% is fiber, 44% is commingled

Before China started restricting imports it was easy to recycle dirty recyclables. Now it is much harder.

Only the strong survive- MoCo has kept contamination rate low and maintained low moisture readings. County sends material to domestic, Indonesia, and Korean markets. County has had no interruption in markets for recyclables. Other jurisdictions were stuck. Dual stream helps keep materials stream clean.

Industry Standards—12% moisture allowance for paper. MoCo consistently under 12%.

With dual stream—minimal moisture gets through. Even in hottest and rainiest seasons material is much dryer than at single stream facilities.

Single stream has prohibited materials, dual stream does not. These can cause a load to be rejected.

Mixed paper specs—all paper and paperboard; contamination less than 2%.

MoCo is well positioned to access domestic and international markets.

Most fiber mills are in Eastern U.S. Most plastic US mills also in eastern U.S.

Glass recycling—challenge accepted—material needs to be clean to be recycled. MoCo-separate brown, green, and clear glass. MoCo gets rebate for its glass.

Pricing—County receives higher price than average Northeast regional prices because of high quality of its materials.

Fiber markets are the most affected by quality. MoCo is getting \$20-\$30/ton premium b/c of quality, compared to Northeast region. Biggest premium for mixed fiber.

More aluminum cans in summer, less in winter—affects market prices. Same with fiber—flux around holiday season.

More government initiatives focused on waste reduction. Focus on sustainability and environmental protection, manufacturing using recycled content. Economic pressures, new capacity coming on board, closures. All contributing to rising demand for fiber.

Angie is co-chair on extended packaging responsibility committee—bill being proposed—putting together recommendations on how we can help processors with recycling. Need money to increase waste diversion.

Just because you collect it doesn't mean you can recycle it.

Questions:

Q: Are plastics we sell, are they reused as is? Melted?

A: Generally, melted down after wash/grind process. PET bottles go to textile market, carpet, could go back to making bottles. Same with HDPE and polypropylene.

Q: Where does steel go?

A: Automotive and construction

Q: What is timeframe for various reports required by MD recycling needs assessment law

A: Will be released to the public by end of the year.

Q: Is organics recycling included in this discussion?

A: It's a packaging law, compostable packaging will be discussed.

Q: What happens to revenues from sale of recyclable materials?

A: M.E.S. passes through recycling revenue back to County.

Q: How much is exported?

A: All plastic, aluminum and steel- domestic, 80-90% of fiber—domestic. Right now new mills in U.S. make for strong demand. Angie puts bids out and gets the best price for recyclables.

Q: Why do we get higher price than other counties near us?

A: Effectiveness of education re separation; what comes inbound is very clean. Dual stream is much cleaner than single stream. Single stream took off when quality was less of a concern. When quality became more of a concern, more places invested in dual stream.

Jeff Camera—RRMD—Upper Lot Recycling and Reuse Program Updates

- Durable medical goods—16,000 lbs, \$180,000 in value (what people would have paid for this)
- Have partnership with MD. Dept of Aging. Equipment is sanitized/repaired- and then sent to Dept. of Aging.
- Electronics Recycling—1,106 tons recycled, increase of 100+ tons YTD. One company takes all material.
- Mattresses—10,080 units/yr—175-200 tons of mattresses recycled annually.
- Plastic film—collected 1,200-1,500 lbs of plastic film since July 2024. Reduces contamination of curbside recyclables. Collected at drop-off site at Transfer Station. Can now recycle plastic pillows used for packaging—previously couldn't do that.
- Not telling people to not take plastic bags to Giant. Transfer station another option.
- When do waste composition study—see what materials are not hitting tipping floor—over several years see impacts of recycling programs—less electronics. Next frontier is food scraps. Residential, commercial. In next waste composition study in a couple of years will see significant reduction in organics that is being disposed of. Biggest vendor for plastic film—Trex—plastic decking.

Questions

Q: Where do we stand on RFP for waste management that Arcadis was working on.

A: Arcadis is looking at options. RRMD is talking with legal and procurement depts. We are looking now to complete RFP by end of October. Will release then for proposals.

Q: Does RRMD have preferred alternative for overall solid waste system technology?

A: Mixed waste processing with complements—such as AD or C & D recycling.

Q: What's happening with electronics materials that are being recycled?

A: Previous vendor only took select items, would refuse items such as wires, and computer mice. New vendor will take all electronic items, 80-100 different items are accepted and getting recycled.

Q: IS MWP going to separate organics from non-organics?

A: Yes. Separates different components of waste stream as much as possible.

Q: Is Climate Change Office coordinating with RRMD? Want zero waste to be in annual report. Zero waste was in 2023 quarterly reports, but was not in annual report. Want it to be in 2024 annual report.

A: Willie will check on this.

Regarding organics letter—update on that. Willie—EA, which produced organics report, is looking at the organics letter, Willie will get back to SWAC.

Legislative Updates:

Wasted Food and Reduction Bill—supports distributed composting, has been brought up in previous years, has broad support from stakeholders. Now is time to get organized for next legislative session. One strategy—get counties to weigh in.

Summary of Bill

- Would create 2 grant programs—one for on-farm food waste recycling programs, another funding wasted food reduction and diversion projects—would cover on-farm and off-farm projects, including composting, waste reduction, dishwashers.
- Would be funded by surcharge on waste disposal. Owner/operator of waste disposal facilities would collect disposal surcharge and submit to state. Ave MD tipping fee was \$64. 29 states have surcharges on waste disposal. Counties can run their own programs and opt out of state program.

Next meeting will be October 9th.

Questions from public

Q: Is dual stream a clear winner? **A:** YES

Q: Is there a drop off for organics? **A:** No, but have at 4 farmers markets.

With single stream you may get higher recycling rates, but much of it isn't recyclable.

Meeting Adjourned—7:43 pm.