

MONTGOMERY COUNTY SOLID WASTE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, June 4, 2025– 5:30 – 7:30pm
MEETING NOTES

SWAC members in attendance:

Robin Barr, Vice Chair	Mark Symborski (M-NCPPC rep,
Kaela Martins, Secretary	nonvoting)
Barry Shanoff	John Meyer
Fred Kranz	Michelle Ennis
Peter Mukerjee	Dawn Selis
Kavita Battula	Troy Cavell
Lauren Greenberger	
Dapo Awe	

SWAC Members absent:

Amy Maron, Chair
Chaz Miller
Lauren Greenberger
Dapo Awe
Andrew Cassilly

DEP Officials in attendance:

Lisa Shine, Executive Administrative Assistant to the RRMD Division Director
David Frank, RRMD, Technical Liaison to SWAC
Eileen Kao, RRMD, Chief, Waste Reduction and Recycling Section

Guests:

Members of the public:

Parke Nickolson, Citizen of Rockville

AGENDA

Meeting started (approx 5:35)
April 2025 Minutes approved (approx 5:36)

Presentation on Waste Reduction Efforts at MCP: John Meyer, Recycling & Waste Reduction Manager, Department of Facilities Management, Division of Sustainability & Compliance, Montgomery County Public Schools (approx. 5:40)

- Mission: Support students' success by developing a school approach to environmental stewardship, and leading change to incorporate sustainable considerations in all decisions.
- Vision: Be the forefront of environmental stewardship at MCPS schools and for students.

- Key Highlights:
 - The U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon District Sustainability Award. As of 2024, 12 different schools in Montgomery County have received that award.
 - In 2024, the Division of Sustainability and Compliance was recertified as a Maryland Green Center. It represents the Commit to Maryland Green Schools, a program that represents a commitment to the Maryland Green Schools. MCPS has 101 green schools. MCPS is shooting for 50% and is very close.

- Food Waste Reduction & Composting
 - The Division of Sustainability and Compliance (DSC) Food Recovery Program is currently active in 113 schools. Each school recovers approximately 52 food items per day.
 - Food waste is very minimal as kids are in need of food at different parts of the day. This has led to minimal donation drop offs.
 - Currently 22 schools are participating in post-consumer food waste composting programs. These initiatives focus on diverting food scraps left over after meals. This is primarily funded and led through student-led groups. Students play a central role in fundraising and educating peers, monitoring waste stations, and promoting proper composting practices in their cafeterias.
 - Two central facilities participating in food waste composting effort: the Carver Educational Services Center (CESC) and the Central Food Processing Facility. These sites generate significant volumes of food scraps.

- Recycling & Waste Reduction
 - MCPS recycles plastic, paper, yard waste, and typical items. There are a lot of items they can't recycle through the main waste stream (markers, pens, glue sticks, etc.) and have started different diversion programs for.
 - Last year they diverted over 100,000 markers from the landfill.
 - HP Ink cartridges are sent back to the company warehouse.
 - Plastic film is recycled through a company called Trex. MCPS held a competition last year, where 73 schools participated and collected grocery bags and all other film.
 - MCPS partnered with Montgomery County's Department of Environmental Protection's Watershed Restoration Division. MCPS completed 23 schoolyard cleanups in the Anacostia watershed with about 3,500 students doing hands-on work.
 - For capital projects, MCPS has a waste reduction process for school and modernization projects. When a school is torn down and/or modernized, they are averaging about an 86% recycling rate and reuse rate. MCPS works with multiple stakeholders like maintenance, construction, etc. to mark things off

that can be recycled or used at another school. The last project was Northwood High School, with a recycling rate of 93%.

- 2024 Waste Reduction Performance
 - MCPS recycled a total of 32,941 tons. The top items being diverted were:
 - Electronic waste
 - Motor oil
 - Batteries
 - Tires
 - Food scraps for composting
 - There has been a steady increase in student enrollment, but solid waste accumulation has decreased. MCPS believes that different waste reduction programs contributed to this performance.
- Student Engagement
 - On April 13th, MCPS held its annual Youth Climate Summit. Around 400 kids participated in breakout sessions focused on impactful climate change actions.
 - MCPS has an annual student poster contest. Students from each school pick out the top 3 posters, and then MCPS staff and students vote on their favorites. The posters are shown in all schools, public libraries and other buildings in the county.
 - On April 22, 2024, MCPS hosted a Student Environment Volunteer Day at Loiederman Middle School. Students engaged in hands-on learning about sustainability while helping build flower beds and outdoor classroom furniture as part of the second phase of the MCPS Urban Farm project.
- Questions from SWAC Members
 - a. The student population in 2005 was about 140,000. In 2023, the population is 160,000. That's only a 15% increase in 20 years. Any insight on why?
 - i. Population dropped a lot over the initial COVID years. Parents took kids out of school and brought them into private school. Parents are slowly enrolling kids back into public schools.
 - ii. Also, most residents in Montgomery County don't have students in school.
 - b. Is the Urban Farm project part of the educational program or is this an extracurricular activity?
 - i. This has been driven as an extracurricular activity by MCPS
 - c. Are kids really motivated to work on waste reduction, or do they have to be pushed?
 - i. The kids that sign up and volunteer want to do it. John currently has four interns that work with them in the summer who are happy to be there.
 - d. Is sustainability part of the curriculum now?

- i. Yes, there is but not as much as wanted. A portion of the curriculum is worked through outdoor education. Curriculum development is contracted out to a private company, making it difficult for staff to make changes themselves.
 - ii. Partnering with Student Council of Climate Action to help teach sustainability in class.
- e. How are items like pens and markers, hard plastics, recycled?
 - i. Markers, pens, and glue sticks go to TerraCycle.
 - ii. Single use batteries go to CNR Lighting
 - iii. Plastic film is sent to Trex
- f. What does Trex stand for?
 - i. Trex is actually the name of the company.
 - ii. The plastic decking that is outside of houses, that white plastic or tan plastic decking, that's TREX. That's made from plastic bags. They are headquartered in Virginia, in Spotsylvania County.
- g. There are 22 schools with composting programs, and they're all student led. What is the administration reaction to that?
 - i. MCPS doesn't support composting at the moment. Programs are run through student groups by individual schools. The student groups find the funding. Sometimes the school PTA pays for it, or a parent group pays for it, or they get grants. Right now, MCPS don't have a budget for composting.
 - ii. MCPS also has spacing constraints. Between breakfast and lunch, there are probably 300,000 meals a day. That's a lot of compost. So where do the schools bring it? Where do they take it? Most people couldn't handle it or didn't want it.
 - a. A suggestion is to pilot composting in a few schools similar to what the County is doing with neighborhoods. John indicated a pilot might get off the ground soon.

Discussion, future meeting topics, concerns, comments (6:10)

Robin Barr: Carol Jones, previous SWAC Member, ~~and former sheriff's clerk~~, is wanting SWAC to support a letter she has drafted. The letter would include a list of zero waste activities that SWAC has accomplished so far. It would accompany the Climate Action Plan, on the Montgomery County Climate Action Plan Portal.

To discuss in fall when SWAC reconvenes.

Peter Mukerjee: Can we arrange a tour of the Shady Grove Transfer Station?

Lisa Shine to organize as most SWAC members agreed they would be interested in attending this tour.

Robin Bar: Other topics to discuss at future meetings:

- What will come from the Council's partial support of the solid waste collection and disposal fees? An update is needed from RRMD at the next meeting.
- Where will food scraps go?
- Where is construction waste going and how much of it is being recycled?

Meeting adjourned at 6:25 pm.

ACRONYMS

AD	Anaerobic Digestion
C&D	Construction and Demolition
CC	County Council
CE	County Executive
CNG	Compressed Natural Gas
CPI	Consumer Price Index
DAFIG	Dickerson Area Facilities Implementation Group
DEP	Department of Environmental Protection
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
FTE	Full Time Employee
FY	Fiscal Year
H&E	Health and Environment
MDE	Maryland Department of the Environment
MC	Montgomery County
MES	Maryland Environmental Services
MRF	Materials Recovery Facility
MML	Maryland Municipal League
MCPS	Montgomery County Public Schools
MRBT	Material Recovery and Biological Treatment
NPV	Net Present Value
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 Citizens 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