

## MONTGOMERY COUNTY SOLID WASTE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

June 2, 2021 – 5:30 p.m.

### MEETING NOTES

#### SWAC MEMBERS

Heidi Lovett, Chair Adam Diamond, Vice Chair Linda Andrews Gina Angiola	Robin Barr (MML rep.) Sara Bixby Kelly Doordan Paula Jenson	Carol Jones Fred Kranz Ellen Ryan Mark Symborski (non-voting member)
--	--	---

#### SWAC MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE

Sudhir Bastola, Jelena Krstic, Mohan Narayanan, Candy Schimming

#### COUNTY STAFF

Patty Bubar, Deputy Director, DEP

Willie Wainer, Director, Recycling and Resource Management Division (RRMD)

Adam Ortiz, Director, DEP

Anthony Skinner, Business Manager

Eileen Kao, Section Chief, Waste Reduction and Recycling Section, RRMD

Mike Clem, Chief, Recycling and Refuse Services

David Frank, Recycling Planning, Policy, Regulation, and Compliance; Waste Reduction and Recycling Section, RRMD

Lisa Shine, Executive Assistant, RRMD

Marc Elrich, County Executive

Debbie Spielberg, Special Assistant to the County Executive

#### PUBLIC

Amy Maron

Walter Mulbry

The regular meeting of the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) was called to order by the Chair at 5:32 PM on June 2, 2021, as a Zoom on-line meeting. Acronyms are posted at the bottom of this report.

#### OLD BUSINESS

**Approved April 7, 2021, and April 21, 2021, minutes** – The Committee reviewed the minutes from the April 2021 meetings. Motion to approve minutes carried, all voting aye, no abstentions.

#### **SWAC Recommendations to Transportation and Environment Committee regarding OLO Report Number 2019-17: Trash and Recycling Collection: An Evaluation of Current Policies**

Kelly Doordan facilitated this discussion. She reviewed the discussion at the previous meeting at which time Members agreed to support recommendations regarding the merging of Subdistricts A and B as a preferred recommendation, and not the recommendation in the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) Report. Ms. Doordan described the work of a small group that drafted the recommendations, presented revisions that were submitted on the draft, and reviewed the final draft recommendations.

There was general discussion about the letter. Ms. Bixby asked for clarification about the intent of the letter regarding small haulers. Was the intent to unilaterally support small haulers or to provide opportunities for them?

Ms. Doordan responded that the drafting group did not wish to elevate the concerns of the small hauler impacts, but would consider some smaller route carve-outs, that allow a greater variety of contractors to compete.

Discussion ended. Ms. Ryan moved to adopt the letter, Ms. Bixby seconded, all members present voted in favor with no abstentions.

### **NEW BUSINESS - Discussion with County Executive**

The County Executive (CE) joined the meeting at 6:05.

CE: The CE opened with a statement that it is time to move our waste management system into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that we will need to make big changes to get there, and he reiterated that he continued to think the incinerator was a bad deal for the County.

The CE stated that he agreed with the consolidation of the subdistricts and also thinks we should bring solid waste in house (rather than private sector). He also expressed support for implementing Pay As You Throw (PAYT) or Save As You Throw (SAYT) because it incentivizes recycling over disposal. But, he stated that he wanted to combine the rollout for PAYT with curbside food scraps composting so that people would see how diverting food scraps reduced their trash. He noted that he composts at home and his remaining trash is plastic bags or paper with plastic attached to it – there was very little residual after recycling and composting. Second, he wants to move forward with a Request for Information to get landfill pricing estimates to dispose of waste in landfills rather than the incinerator. Beyond that, he wants to do more to reclaim value from what we are currently putting in the incinerator. For example, consider front-end waste segregation at construction sites, wood recycling programs (like the example in Baltimore), and encouraging entrepreneurs to fix bikes and appliances. How can we minimize disposal?

The CE also said that he was looking at composting versus anaerobic digestion (AD) for organics. He thinks we can combine systems to optimize benefits of both. He expressed interest in green natural gas and capturing methane to fuel fleets, for example, and to minimize methane releases from landfills. A company has approached the County saying they could build a facility and the County could do bi-directional hauling – bring food scraps to the facility and haul back the digestate to our own composting site. He noted the aggressive climate goals the County has set and stated we cannot continue to emit carbon as we have been.

Ms. Lovett noted that the Committee continues to be very supportive of PAYT, as well as approaching solid waste planning in a systemic, holistic manner (rather than piecemeal as different parts need to be replaced/updated).

Ms. Angiola stated her support for the vision the CE described, but added that we're not close to being aggressive enough to make the needed impacts. We need to also change the culture. In terms of trash, we need to express - and for everyone to understand - the vision of what the County is trying to do. People might hear pieces of it and rebel against a piece because it's inconvenient, but if they see the big picture, they might buy in more. Also consider including embodied carbon.

Ms. Jones noted that our Committee has strongly supported PAYT. We recommended that the budget include support for expert advice to look at lessons learned elsewhere and to adapt a plan to implement PAYT here. The Governor just announced he would let the waste diversion bill become law without signature – that presents an opportunity in timing. She added that the interest in AD is an important piece and that co-digestion at waste water treatment plants should also be considered. The CE responded that he was interested in AD and they he viewed the digestate as a resource too, because it has value. Recouping value and bringing in revenues from our waste stream can help reduce costs to citizens.

Ms. Lovett asked if there have been any joint efforts with the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to consider innovation hubs, incubator-style programs, and partnerships with universities to help incentivize small new industries? The CE stated he would be interested in information/studies on this.

Ms. Angiola asked if there was any intention to work with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) on waste reduction (to get at behavior change)? The curriculum could reinforce that there is no “away” – everything has to go somewhere. The CE responded that the school system could switch to compostable trays and cutlery so that more could be composted and the system could save on disposal fees, but he also noted that it is a challenge to work with the school system and that the CE’s office does not have control over MCPS facilities or curriculum. Change could be driven by parent demand.

The CE asked about the Committee’s position and recommendations on implementing PAYT. There was general discussion and a recommendation by the Committee that the County should use an expert consultant to look at the County’s attributes and to narrow down the options of what would work best here. There was also a comment that legislative changes would be required related to solid waste charges and that the subdistricts should be consolidated prior to (or at least concurrently with) implementing PAYT. Mr. Ortiz mentioned that there was not yet consensus among staff as to the best method for implementing PAYT (bags, cart size, etc.) and that there are several other pending projects that everyone should keep in mind because they would also be drivers for increasing solid waste fees (e.g., necessary MRF upgrades, Gude Landfill cap, etc.).

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Mulbry commented that there is a local expert on anaerobic digestion (AD) - Stephanie Lansing at University of Maryland – and that Ms. Lansing could be a fantastic resource on AD in general as well as on phosphorous management because we are phosphorous-limited.

The CE commented that he was interested in talking with experts in the area and always open to new information. In particular, he noted he was skeptical at first, but he is interested in exploring ways to replace resources (fuels) that would otherwise need to be extracted. He mentioned the potential of additional, distributed composting solutions, such as on-farm facilities.

Mr. Mulbry commented that the scale [of on-farm composting facilities] was too small to make the needed impact.

Ms. Maron introduced herself as Sierra Club Montgomery County’s Zero Waste Coordinator. She mentioned that she and Ms. Doordan and others had conducted research on Toronto’s AD program

(Toronto accepts food scraps, diapers, sanitary products). Toronto does not have city-wide composting, but they use the gas produced to fuel their trash trucks as part of a closed-loop system. Ms. Maron recommended talking with Toronto officials about their program, and she added there is some controversy about the shredded plastics that come out of the system and how they are managed.

Ms. Lovett asked about whether any reusable takeout container companies have reached out to the County and noted that Portland, a city in North Carolina, and others are piloting programs. The CE asked for information on environmental costs/benefits of reusables vs compostable containers as well as how people would find info on where to return containers. Ms. Angiola mentioned that there are apps that help consumers find drop locations. Ms. Lovett asked how local government could incentivize these types of innovations and circular economy businesses.

### **UPDATES FROM RECYCLING AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DIVISION STAFF**

Mr. Wainer shared that his staff on the call prepared an update on the commercial food scraps collection program regarding new partners, total tonnages, signing up National Institute of Health (NIH), Manna, etc. Regarding the residential curbside composting pilot, the Department is waiting for responses, but there was an update from the procurement office today that there might be a delay in preparing/sharing/reviewing bids while the procurement office was physically moving to new space. Ms. Kao shared that the commercial partnership program is up to thirteen partners, and through May 28<sup>th</sup> they have collected and delivered to Western Branch 174 tons of food scraps for composting. The most recent partner is an NIH café and they are currently working with five restaurants at the Westfield Montgomery mall to try to train staff and roll the program out there. The Department issued the residential curbside RFP in early May and is looking forward to reviewing bids as soon as they are available from the procurement office so that they can move the project forward.

### **UPCOMING MEETINGS AND ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Jones mentioned that the Organics Subcommittee would be meeting in two weeks and would further discuss some of the options that came out of this evening's meeting.

Ms. Angiola mentioned that she would set up a meeting for the Recycling Subcommittee.

Ms. Lovett mentioned that Ms. Schimming was interested in setting up an Education Subcommittee and they would work together to set a meeting up.

Mr. Ortiz thanked the Committee for its work and reiterated the Department's interest in listening to the Committee's ideas (particularly with regards to Save As You Throw implementation).

The CE thanked the Committee and reiterated that he was listening and always interested in hearing the Committee's ideas.

The next regular Committee meeting will be held on September 1, 2021. Topic TBD

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at 7:22 pm.

### **ACRONYMS**

C&D Construction and Demolition  
CC County Council

CE County Executive  
CNG Compressed Natural Gas

CPI	Consumer Price Index	NTR	Nothing to Report
DAFIG	Dickerson Area Facilities Implementation Group	OCC	Old Corrugated Cardboard
DSWS	Division of Solid Waste Services	OLO	Office of Legislative Oversight
DEP	Department of Environmental Protection	PAYT	Pay As You Throw
EfW	Energy from Waste	RRF	Resource Recovery Facility
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning	RRMD	Recycling & Resource Management Division
FTE	Full Time Employee	SA	Service Area for County collection
FY	Fiscal Year	SAYT	Save As You Throw
HHW	Household Hazardous Waste	SCA	Sugarloaf Community Association
MDE	Maryland Department of the Environment	SWAC	Solid Waste Advisory Committee
MC	Montgomery County	SWMP	Solid Waste Management Plan
MES	Maryland Environmental Services	T&E	Transportation and Environment Committee
MRF	Materials Recovery Facility	TPD	Tons per Day
MML	Maryland Municipal League	ZWTF	Zero Waste Task Force