

December 05, 2018
Integrated Waste System Strategic Plan Task Force¹
5:30 p.m.

Called to order: by Chairperson Chaz Miller at 5:30 p.m.

Attending in person:

Task force members: Chaz Miller, Sara Bixby, Ken Lavish, Keith Levchenko, Lauren Greenberger (5:40 p.m.) in person. Robin Wiener, Caroline Taylor, and Peter Ettinger by phone.

County Staff: Willie Wainer, Marilu Enciso, Patty Bubar

Attending as guests: Neil Seldman - ILSR; Susan Eisendrath – Council Sustainability Working Group and Sierra Club; Kelly Doordan- SWAC; Joy Nurmi – County Executive’s Office; Debbie Spielberg - Marc Elrich’s Office; Kitty McIlroy – Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority; Amy Maron – Sierra Club; Danielle Meitir, Kathryn Gargurevich – MC- FACS

Consultant: Christine Roarke, HDR (5:45 p.m.- 7:00 p.m.) by phone

Agenda

1. Approve Minutes of Last Meeting
2. Select Secretary for the meeting
3. Discuss Survey Results
4. Discuss Task Two Draft Report
5. Discuss Task One Response
6. Adjourn

Minutes of the October 25, 2018 meeting: emailed out earlier in the day. Bixby, Lavish move to approve. Passed unanimously.

Secretary: Sara Bixby volunteered.

Discuss Survey and Draft Task Two Report

a. Process:

Miller proposes we spend 10 minutes on how to proceed in the meeting. His suggestion is that since the survey results are straightforward that we begin with a discussion on best practices for consideration by Montgomery County found within the Task Two Report (starting on page 50), then circle back at the end on how to proceed next year (meeting monthly or only to review draft reports).

¹ May 30, 2018 Memorandum from Isiah Leggett, County Executive, to Hans Riemer, President, Montgomery County Council

b. Input:

Wiener said she wants to know what the county will be doing with Task Force comments. She doesn't want to waste time if there isn't money or time available for the consultant to make changes in response.

Wainer said County staff took care of most of the comments in task 1 by breaking them into three categories – changes made, belonging to other tasks, and those out of scope for this project. There is a budget and the Task Force is not being solicited for feedback to amend all reports, such as the task 2 report, because it is out of scope and budget for the consultant to complete another round of changes. However, the County will be requesting feedback to certain reports, such as the task 5 report.

Levchenko said that if staff identifies potential out-of-scope questions, the Task Force should weigh in on whether it is worth amending the scope and adding resources.

Wiener said he accepts that the Task Force will be heard and that its input is valuable.

Discussion Survey Results

Most responses addressed the following:

- 1) Waste reduction, reuse, recycling and education
- 2) Food scraps
- 3) Collection services for residents county-wide

Levchenko encouraged the Task Force and staff to recognize that the survey was not a statistically accurate scientific survey of the entire County, so reviewers should be cautious that the results are not representative of the whole County.

Miller said his opinion is that surveys like the one distributed by the County attract those who are passionately interested and those who want to complain.

Regarding food waste collection: Greenberger commented on the number of responses about not wanting to pay extra for food waste collection and Ettinger on whether individuals could spend time separating food waste, even if they didn't want to pay more. It was noted that the cost question could be asked in multiple different ways and likely receive different responses, regarding willingness-to-pay for food waste collection.

Taylor said that she hadn't wanted to complicate the meeting by releasing the "companion" survey done by her group, but she would do so after the meeting for the Task Force and County to review.

Discussion of Task Two Draft Report

Christine Roarke from HDR gave opening comments about the Task 2 report. She said it was sometimes challenging to get information, especially comparable information, from the six communities while staying within the project scope and budget. Among the changes HDR sees as appropriate for Montgomery County consideration were:

- c. Standardize trash containers
- d. Montgomery County is second only to San Francisco (SF) in terms of the number of regulations already in place. Less work to do there unless go up to state-level.
- e. Programmatic changes – good changes to consider in how to provide expanded, more convenient services like County-wide collection and more drop-off locations for residents (as noted in survey results).
- f. Administrative changes – SF was described as more nimble than Montgomery County because it has only one contractor, Recology, so the City is able to do relatively quick updates and improvements to its program compared to most other jurisdictions. *Miller later noted that Recology is written into the city charter.*

Roarke acknowledged there is a lot of material to be addressed in Task 5 of this project.

Miller asked if there are common best practices? Roarke said the other five cities all have some sort of food waste diversion program and some type of PAYT. She said that Montgomery County has a good recycling program and is the only program of the six using dual stream collection, which is beneficial in today's markets. Montgomery County is on the low end of fees and very efficient for the services it provides. Montgomery County is also the only community that had some areas in which solid waste is collected by the free market and some areas served by county contracts.

Overall, there was a broad mixture of services provided to various sectors in the benchmarking communities.

Certain Task Force members noted approval and appreciation for the Task 2 Report conducted by HDR.

It was also asked why commercial mandates were not touched on in this report for recycling, composting, etc. and Roarke responded that the ordinances were referenced (e.g. Austin's business food waste recycling mandate).

Bixby asked about comparing what is claimed as source reduced, credited, etc.? Roarke said HDR compared communities using the state of Maryland recycling rate (not waste diversion) methodology regardless of their specific in-state allowances. By that approach, Toronto's claims for tires, deposit return programs, grass cycling are not credited. Similarly, Minnesota rules don't consider ash recovery to be recycling, though metals recycled from WTE ash are tracked as recycling so HDR added that portion in. Any Source Reduction credits allowed by MRA and claimed in Montgomery County's waste diversion rate were not incorporated in this comparison.

Wiener asked if it were possible to capture before and after data on some programs in the other communities (e.g., PAYT)? Roarke said no because some of the programs have been in place for some time and it's hard to isolate the effect of any single program because it often happens in conjunction with other updates going on in that community, with other changes implemented at the same time.

Roarke said San Francisco has a surprisingly long list of acceptable recyclable material in its collection program. Roarke also noted that Toronto has a long list of acceptable organic material in its organics collection program, such as diapers, pet waste and sanitary products.

Greenberger said she was sometimes frustrated in her read of the Task 2 report because she wanted more details in the areas of education, outreach, and how the various programs promote behavior change, but understood it was not part of scope. When told that would happen in Task 5, Greenberger said she assumed HDR would draw from more extensive examples – not just from the five benchmark communities but also the rest of the country and world. Roarke said yes. Bixby asked to confirm that answer and that a wider analysis was included in the project scope. Roarke said the scope is not exhaustive of every community across the world but will provide a more extensive overview of best practices.

As two examples, Greenberger said she was looking for something like San Diego resource park that incorporates businesses and provides for jobs onsite, and best practices for construction and demolition material (e.g. aggressive mandates in other communities). Roarke said HDR couldn't do extensive benchmarking for every community but would rely on HDR resources to draw in more.

Taylor asked if the Task Force could provide links to programs of interest through Miller to HDR? Miller said he thought the Task Force should also share those with each other.

Ettinger asked if financial modeling were included in the contract scope as financial metrics would also be helpful. Roarke responded that yes, anticipated costs would be discussed for program implementation recommendations.

That led to a discussion about financial conclusions/recommendations in the benchmarking.

- Desired: Transparency in costs – make program costs visible to users, as well as to Task Members, so that residents know recycling is not free. For example, recycling has different costs to Subdistricts A and B, and it is confusing to figure out as a resident. It was noted that San Francisco may be the only benchmark community that has clear, separate recycling charge
- Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT): Task Force members are interested in this, want it stated more clearly as a recommendation; with additional discussion about the pros, cons, and implementation steps; and done in conjunction with the addition of new materials to the County's collection system (e.g., food waste?). It was noted that there may be pushback about a perceived large family penalty if introducing this sort of program with carts. It was also noted that PAYT would be hard to implement for multi-family. It was noted that there are 4,000-5,000 PAYT communities throughout the U.S. and that when a community implements this type of program they tend to see a huge increase in their recycling rate when the original rate was very low to begin with. Ultimately, this large increase could not be expected for Montgomery County which has strong recycling rate to begin with.
- Miller noted that in San Francisco, there are very high commercial rates charged to offset the costs to run expansive residential programs (for political reasons)

- Financial/economic benefits for recycling different commodities: should recycling of a specific commodity be promoted if its environmental benefit is low and its economic cost high?

Physical conclusions/recommendations: Provide a standardized collection container. Cost to do so?

Regulatory conclusions /recommendations: Primarily related to food waste. Taylor asked that in discussing food recovery, not everything should be directed to compost (and should include donations, partnering with non-profits to prevent wasted food). It was also noted that Toronto does not mix food waste and yard waste in collections because they use a digester for food waste and it is cost effective to process the two material streams separately.

Programmatic conclusions/recommendations:

- Cost implications of changes in collection frequency and types of collection
- Provide county-contracted trash collection county-wide either in-house or privately contracted (Subdistrict B and A) for consistency and to reduce truck traffic/emissions/redundancy by eliminating multiple trucks covering the same route – clarify the language/recommendation
 - Does the county have data on the identities of the haulers working in Subdistrict B? Wainer estimated that between 8-14 (local and national) haulers work there. It was also noted that SWAC has been requesting a list of haulers that are providing the service in Subdistrict B. A copy of the list would be appreciated. It was asked if large haulers are getting out of residential collection contracts and Wainer responded not exactly.

Administrative conclusions/recommendations:

Roarke: The changing waste stream (e.g., smaller newspapers, light-weighting plastics, etc.) makes it more difficult to achieve waste diversion targets as the source material weighs less; DR says some communities are switching to measuring waste disposal instead because it is measurable at facilities. The discussion that followed addressed methods to factor in economic growth and the need to measure changes in per capita waste rather than total waste.

Discussion about environmental metrics:

- Some Task Force members are still concerned that the Task 2 report doesn't address landfills, incineration – environmental impact of the programs evaluated, metrics on pollution, emissions in this evaluation. Both Roarke and County staff members said those discussions are outside the scope of the report and that pollution & emissions are outside both the task and project scope, though the final may touch on GHG at a very high level but not in detail. GHG is mentioned in the scope and will be addressed in Task 5. Task 9 is all about facilities and is likely to address related environmental criteria.

- Miller said the industry is starting to talk about different metrics – for example, moving away from weight and considering environmental impacts (e.g., state of Oregon cradle to grave impacts now adopted as state law).
- In summary, the expectation is that recycling and diversion- environmental considerations are to be addressed in Task 5 and environmental considerations for the portion of the waste stream that is left are to be addressed in Task 9.

Roarke left the call at 7 p.m.

Other Task 2 comments

- Lavish also wants to see a discussion about education and outreach.
- Greenberger reiterated her interest in a discussion about commercial Construction & Demolition (C&D) recycling programs and got concurrence from several Task Force members.
 - Miller asked if Maryland allows Montgomery County to set requirements for C&D processing/recovery or if those efforts are reserved to the state because C&D is not putrescible? It was confirmed that C&D isn't included in the Maryland Recycling Act (MRA) measurements, so setting a standard for C&D recovery in Montgomery County wouldn't change the numbers under the MRA, thought it would/could change the numbers disposed overall.
 - Enciso said approximately 40 percent of the C&D generated in in Montgomery County for CY 17 was recycled. Enciso also stated a portion of what is received at the Transfer Station gets recycled, another portion is sent to the RRF and remaining amount sent to a C&D landfill out of the County.

Discussion Task 1 response:

Wainer said the Task 1 report is final as some changes were made in response to the Task Force comments sent to the County.

Taylor said her response to comments about fly ash being recyclable is that the Task Force can set a different answer for Montgomery County than what is allowable under Maryland law and as such she wanted to stop including the ash in the numbers discussed in this report. Miller agrees that using the most accurate data and rate possible will ultimately help the County in the long run. He cited how San Francisco promoted their 80 % diversion rate for so long, seemingly ignoring the actual 500,000 tons of material it was disposing of every year, which now seems to be hurting them as they must reevaluate their programs. Miller also cited Seattle, with the highest truly representative rate that he is aware of, and the city is struggling to hit 60%.

Discussion about plan for future meetings

The Task 5 report is expected at the end of January beginning of February. That will require a meeting.

Miller – other proposed future topics:

- What does zero waste mean? Does zero mean zero? Come prepared to the meeting to discuss our individual concepts and what we are aiming for as a group and County. The Zero Waste International Alliance was brought up as an example. It was asked what “internationally accepted” meant, which the alliance uses to convey its definition of zero waste. It was noted that no government bodies have adopted the alliance’s definition.
- Discuss food scraps recovery / composting/ AD technology overview

Next meeting – Miller will send out an email looking to set a permanent monthly meeting date.

Public comments

Eisendrath– Wants to know how the Strategic Plan to Advance Composting, Compost Use, and Food Scraps Diversion Plan will be used within this process. Will it be integrated into one of the tasks in this project? Taylor– stated that she sent that in her comments and Miller added a linked it to the comments that went to the County and the consultant. It was also noted that it was likely to be incorporated in future County’s 10-year Solid Waste Plan. There is an interest in food scrap collection and processing, mandatory diversion of food scraps, co-collection with yard waste or another waste stream vs separate collection. Eisendrath wants to see backyard composting, community composting and smaller-scale composting addressed in the Aiming for Zero Waste Plan, too.

Levchenko asked if composting food scraps in the backyard is going to compete with a potential county-wide curbside food scraps collection.

It was noted that when backyard composting is promoted, it leads to cleaner organics collection streams once implemented, and that the two types of programs can complement one another. Overall, it was noted that the Task Force’s job is to prioritize and make recommendations based on all the information available, based on best practices.

Debbie Spielberg – Said she was surprised not to see a bottle bill in the best practices since there were benchmark communities that had them. She also told everyone that there is a December 7, 3 to 4:30 p.m. discussion about backyard composting in the Council cafeteria conference room, followed by a public meeting on December 8th.

Adjourned – 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Sara Bixby