

**SOLID WASTE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Montgomery County, Maryland**

**MEETING NOTES  
October 7, 2020**

**SWAC MEMBERS**

Kelly Doordan, Chair Heidi Lovett, Vice-Chair Linda Andrews Gina Angiola Sara Bixby	Adam Diamond Sara Ducey Paula Jenson Carol Jones Jelena Krstic	Ellen Ryan Candy Schimming David Winstead Mark Symborski (non voting member)
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Absent: Jamie Andrews, Mark Freedman

**COUNTY STAFF - DRRM**

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Adam Ortiz, Director, Department of Environmental Protection  
Lisa Shine, Executive Assistant, Recycling and Resource Management  
Willie Wainer, Director, Recycling and Resource Management

**GUESTS**

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Amy Moran, Sierra Club  
Jennifer P.

The regular meeting of the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) was called to order by the Chair at 5:33 PM on September 2, 2020 as a Microsoft TEAM on-line meeting. Introductions were made. Acronyms are posted at the bottom of this report.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Approve June, August, September minutes**

- All minutes were posted in the shared Google Drive. Some corrections and comments were made.
- Sara Ducey - moved to accept the three sets of minutes; Sara Bixby seconded.
- No opposed. Passed by unanimous consent.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Discussion with Director Adam Ortiz**

Kelly Doordan, Chair

- SWAC's interest in this conversation is to better understand, from the director's view, (1) what role SWAC can play in supporting the Division and the County's work; and (2) how has the COVID 19 pandemic impacted the Department and the County's recycling and waste-related work.

**Personal Background**

- Director Ortiz had a similar position in Prince Georges Co. most recently, and prior to that he oversaw performance management. Helped lead the development of the Upper Marlboro food scraps facility, litter programs, stormwater improvement programs.
- He was mayor of Edmonston for 10 years, and holds a holistic view of the components within the department. The pieces are all integrated.

## **Transformative Time**

- For the industry and the department, which has Council, County Executive, and public support of environmental efforts and an excellent mix of staff talent.
- New title, Recycling and Resource Management, was very intentional to shift focus to recycling and waste reduction. Need to extract value from whatever cannot be put into the MRF.
- New communications office in the Department - none existed before. New Director is Cindy Pena.
  - Focus on reducing litter, using LEDs, making smart energy choices, etc.
  - Government can do some things, but communities and public need to be empowered.
  - Web/graphics are better to ensure communications are clear and compelling.
  - Also, eye on equity to ensure new residents/audiences/multi-families are part of focus.
- Also have a new hire in a Partnership coordinator position.

## **Infrastructure**

- Montgomery is fortunate - we own the comprehensive infrastructure.
- Remarkable asset, designed in the early 80s. But now, 40 years later, needs an upgrade to be larger, more efficient, and handle more volume. MRF is small, old, clunky, overcapacity and costly.
- Transfer station has a lot of uses, but small footprint is limiting.
- Goal - create an Eco Park or Resources Recovery Center to co-locate all activities.
  - Will request a design bid.
- Save as you throw, subdistrict B have been approved by the County Executive. Policy and programming are moving forward.

## **Food waste - top priority.**

- Pilot from commercial entities underway, now at 1000 tons now.
- Want to grow, but all goes to Prince Georges now, which has capacity limits.
- Handful of options are being discussed.

## **Policy and Operations**

- Subdistrict B, north part of the County - inefficient now, but change will be a big lift.
- Save as you throw (rather than pay as you throw). Looking at programs; has lot of public interest.
- Source reduction
  - #6 cups -may be first community to ban this, but on straw ban, we are late in this region.
  - County Council hearing on Monday, Oct. 12
- Product stewardship legislation - being discussed at state level; potential Legislation would require manufacturers to have more responsibility about packing types, etc. (more "skin" in the game").

## **COVID crisis**

- Department/staff have made transition to virtual workforce.
- Different for the people on the front line - such as staff at the Transfer Station.
- Department was to move to new Wheaton office - 4th and 5th floors; now that date is uncertain.
- Performance management review -recycling rates higher during COVID since more teleworking:
  - 17% increase in recycling (plastics were over the average with more food service items); and contamination down 26% due to education/outreach (crews/drivers tagging bins).
  - Commercial waste down 12-15%, and greenhouse gases going down.
  - Equals a savings of about 3,000 tons of material = potentially \$300,000.

## **Questions/ Discussions**

Q: What are the changes and opportunities that have resulted from the pandemic, what is short term, what long term? SWAC hopes there are serious conversations as to how our lifestyles are changing.

- That topic is part of the Climate Change Working Group work.
- Telecommuting has huge impact, since vast majority of emissions are from tailpipes. Discussing staggered schedules, work from home more.
- New building standards for energy efficiency – goal to retrofit buildings that are “energy hogs.”
- More emphasis on waste reduction overall; focus on bulk purchases, deposits on bottles, EPR or something similar, educational opportunities (use school curriculum to encourage food waste reduction, composting, etc., while improving health).

- The Committee discussed need to reestablish a better relationship with the school system.

Q: Flat fees built into our taxes -- do you have the ability to increase revenues? And what will happen if we move to "save as you throw?"

- There are fixed costs built up into the MRF, and it's mostly the same with the RRF - costs will not be that much more.
- Large impact on the budget will be putting out an RFP for Subdistrict B recycling contracts.
- We are paying 10 year old prices and CP, covering about 70,000 homes. Expect prices to go up 55-75%. That will be a big swing.

Q: You discussed diverting organics to an alternative facility – what are the different strategies to handle waste if we get rid of the incinerator? What do we do with the material not process-able, not divertible?

- Staff are presenting options over the next few months. Medium to long term solutions.
- Food and construction debris are a huge component.
- For carbon based organics, food - will be presenting a few options for the best site.
- Assessing whether it should be a mandatory program like yard waste, and discussing a phase-in, or do it all right away.

#### Food Waste

- Curbside pilot planned for Georgia Ave/Beltway/Silver Spring/Bethesda area; County has a truck.
- Commercial food waste (18-20%) had gone to C&D recycler in Clarksburg, but it had a fire 3 yrs ago, went offline, expected to go back on line later this fall.
- Considering commercial first, the larger generators, 70,000 tons per year of food waste.
- Need location to take the material. Max of 45,000 tons could go to Prince George's Co. Jessup facility did not open; Dickerson area, including site where it is now, has complicated legal situation.
- There has not been any interest demonstrated by local wastewater treatment facilities in co-digesting food waste with wastewater biosolids in their anaerobic digesters (AD) (e.g., though there is capacity in DC Water's Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant 's AD, the engineering staff are not supportive of expanding their activities beyond their basic mission of water treatment).

#### Trash

- If trash is in recycling, won't pick it up. Results upset Montgomery County residents, but it works.
- For smaller "wedges," looking at different strategies.
- Boutique curbside collection, one time a year - thinking of different strategies.
- Considering Save as you throw, and changes in subdistrict B contracts.

#### Other ideas/discussion:

- Promote onsite composting, backyards, on-farm, and decentralized campuses, since it is difficult to site very large sites.
  - 12 acres or bigger, provides a level of efficiency.
  - Smaller decentralized can work, but finding 4-5 sites and provide equipment, proper staff, gets more expensive
- Promoting a composting roundtable, and invited Dept. of Agriculture.
- Regionally, people are interested in their own neighborhoods; considered operating in conjunction with Univ. of Maryland. Hope to meet communities halfway, to be able to handle staff-wise.
- Need a multi model plan
- Hope you come up with a 5-year vision, what the steps are to get there, how the different changes will lead to a healthier county, and ultimately be less expensive in the future.
- Think long term; helping citizens understand what happens to waste products should be main point.
- With telecommuting, has MoCo considered not having as many buildings or less space down the line, having more staff work at home, and transferring \$\$ savings for use where it is needed?
  - Yes, the conversations have changed during COVID.
  - We spend more money on old buildings; County needs to decide what to do with that.
- Regarding the department's need to address equity, inclusion, etc. -- SWAC is not heavily representative -- we need to recruit better to underrepresented communities.

- What skills do you want SWAC members to have?
  - New Partnerships Coordinator just started -- In new year best to meet with Cindy and new staff. They may be able to help with that.

#### Legislation

- Recycling reform task force at State level being led by Kumar Barve and Sara Love.
- SWAC requests to be brought into legislative processes earlier, rather than later.
- Staff agreed, SWAC should be included earlier -- Another new hire, a policy and legislative coordinator starting Monday, will be able to help that.

SWAC members expressed thanks for the Department overview and this evening's discussion.

Last comments by the Director said:

- Goals for the Communications Coordinator and new Partnership Coordinator to reach out to historic groups, municipalities, homeowner groups-- widen our relationships.
- Work to reach the local level, even though County is not very grassroot-oriented.
- Determine what we can do to help lift "Buy Nothing" and similar local solutions.
- Determine what is working and how can we amplify those.

SWAC members expressed thanks for Mr. Ortiz participating in the meeting, the Department overview, and this evening's discussion.

Members want to focus on how SWAC can better support the Department, provide service, and partner better. Director said he will:

- Take ideas to SWAC, to see how they resonate, get guidance.
- Have staff engage more.
- Bring the Communications Coordinator and new Partnership Coordinator to SWAC to discuss ideas, and provide feedback.

After that discussion, SWAC members noted,

- They need some clear, specific tasks or "asks" from the Department; Something assigned.
- What we come up with may not layer well or fit on top of what the Department can do.
- Staff said that they can now share all the actions underway, and problematic items, in FY21, FY22, and FY23. That should provide more structure than before.
- This should provide the opportunity to be more proactive than reactive. Ideas such as structuring feasibility studies, Subdistrict B, save as you throw --this is where SWAC work can fit.
- SWAC would like to help improve the communication and relationship with the school system.
  - The best way to change the future is to reach kids early.
  - Help them learn/change behavior as they grow up.

#### **ACTION ITEMS**

- Organize a schools subcommittee
- Consider a new name for SWAC, in line with new Department name.

#### **DAFIG Update**

- Industrial solar energy production on Ag Reserve land legislation.
- Solar ZTA bill is being sent for study; it's not positive, but Gina heard it is slowed down.
- Looked at particulate matter.

Nominations for SWAC leadership - Election will be during the November meeting.

- Heidi Lovett nominated as chair (Kelly/Sara D)
- Gina Angiola, for vice chair (Heidi/Sara D)

#### **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

- November 4, 2020 – elections for Chair and Vice-Chair.

- Willie will share programs that are slated to move forward. Projects over the next three fiscal years.
- December – no scheduled meeting – possibly hold for training for new members.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Amy Moran, Sierra Club.

- Microsoft team link was not working for her; there is only a dial-in number on the public website.
- She thanked SWAC members for their work.
- Sierra Club just put out a long report with recommendations that are consistent with the Zero Waste Task Force.
- Two plastics bills are a focus for Sierra Club. There is pushback from the restaurant industry.
- They would have a year to implement, and Sierra would not object to allowing more time.
- American Chemistry Council claimed that #6 is not recyclable.
- Had recycling for styrofoam at one time, but closed them due to states banning styrofoam.
- T&E committee will have a work session on the bills on Oct. 12.
- Seeking an amendment: why do we still allow prepackaged food and eggs to be in styrofoam?
  - Giant is not putting chicken on styrofoam containers anymore.
  - A ban would keep out material that is not recyclable.
- Straws: patrons can request them, similar to requests for condiments and stirrers.
- Restaurants should provide an “opt in” with online orders.
- Some smaller “mom and pop” restaurants may have trouble, But it seems easy to add in extra time for them.
- She said she would send list of amendments to SWAC.
- Kelly responded that she shared the report last summer, but is willing to share again.

## **ADJOURN**

Meeting adjourned at 7:41 (Gina Angiola made the motion; Heidi Lovett seconded).

The next meeting is set for November 4, 2020 at 5:30 PM, on-line.

## **ACRONYMS**

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