

# MONTGOMERY COUNTY SOLID WASTE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

January 5, 2022 – 5:30 p.m.

## MEETING NOTES

### SWAC MEMBERS

Adam Diamond, Chair Robin Barr (MML rep.), Vice Chair Sara Bixby	Carol Jones Fred Kranz Heidi Lovett	Ellen Ryan Candy Schimming Mark Symborski, MD NCPPC rep (non- voting member)
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### COUNTY STAFF

Lonnie Heflin, Chief, Material Management Section, RRMD

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

David Frank, Multi-Family Recycling Program Manager, RRMD

Lisa Shine, Executive Assistant, RRMD

**Guest** – Ben Parry, CEO, Compost Crew

The regular meeting of the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) was called to order by the Chair at 5:30 PM on January 5, 2022.

**Dec 2021 meeting minutes** – The Committee deferred until next meeting the approval of the December minutes.

### 1. Residential Curbside Solid Waste Collection Program – Lonnie Heflin, Section Chief, Material Management Section, RRMD

Lonnie used slides for his presentation on food scraps handling.

#### Programs

- Commercial Food Scraps Recycling Partnership Program – started in May 2020, as of November 12, 2021 recycled over 625,000 pounds of commercial food scraps.
- Single Family Residential Food Scraps Collection Pilots – one in Subdistrict A, one in Subdistrict B

#### Organics processing facilities

- MD permitted compost facilities - Tier 2 permit required. <sup>1</sup>
  - 4 existing facilities, and 3 are in planning
  - One facility is across the Bay Bridge (not close).
- On-Farm food scrap composting
  - What could be composted coming from outside sources used to be limited to 20%.
  - Limit increased to 50% with MoCo Ag Reserve Zoning Amendment 20-04 passed in Feb 2021
- BioEnergy DevCo – Anaerobic digestion capacity (Peter Ettinger will be speaking at Feb 2022 SWAC meeting)
  - Current plan is to be operational in 2022.
  - County is interested in reserving capacity.
- Food scraps with lots of waste paper doesn't work – type of contaminant to be avoided.

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<sup>1</sup>

<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/LAND/RecyclingandOperationsprogram/Documents/Composting%20Regulatory%20Comparison%20Exemptions%20and%20Definition.xlsx%2011-1.pdf>

## State legislation

- HB0264 – Became law in May 2021 – Diversion of food residuals/organics recycling – affecting those generating 2 tons beginning in 2023 (first year), 1 ton in 2024:  
<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgaweb/Legislation/Details/hb0264?ys=2021RS?>
- HB0248 – for Condos and Homeowner Assoc. – cannot restrict an owner from contracting with a private entity to collect organic waste materials for composting: <https://legiscan.com/MD/bill/HB248/2021>

## Questions /Discussion

How are we doing with capacity to support organic processing? How prepared are we to meet new mandate?

- 55% of 124,000 tons (in MoCo) is commercial (though smaller businesses are not included in mandate)
- Eileen noted there are ~ 1,620 generators in the County that would be subject to the requirements of phase 1 (2 tons per week, effective Jan 2023) and phase 2 (1 ton per week, effective Jan 2024).
  - Estimated about 1,400 generators within 30-mile radius of an operating facility (willing to sign contract to accept their waste). (Operating facilities include: Key City; PG; Freestate Farms VA)

What is the long -term plan for handling waste in MoCo?

- Lonnie – We don't have all the information needed; too many unknowns.
- Lots of companies are not going to wait for the County to find a solution for their material
- Once better known, plans could be made; outside professional consulting will be needed.

## 2. Ben Parry, CEO, Compost Crew <https://compostcrew.com/>

### Background

- Business started out serving single family homes, grew, have some of their own on-farm facilities, and take waste to other places.
- Goal is always to integrate collections with distributed composting sites to create circular economies and optimize operations.
- 2.5 M pounds annualized initially; now diverting more the 10 M pounds of food scraps annualized.
- Before COVID, we were approximately 50% commercial/50% private home. Commercial dropped dramatically during COVID, but now, it's picking up steam again.
- Recently became a Public Benefit Corporation, and have a duty to the planet as well now.

## Lessons learned from residential and commercial business lines

### 1) Participation

- **Current coverage small relative to potential:** Despite being the leading composting company in the region, CC is serving less than 1% of households, and only a fraction of restaurants and other businesses. Huge growth potential in residential and commercial composting.

#### Residential

- Initially marketed at farmers markets to line up customers. Starting price for individual resident is \$32/month, which can be a barrier.
- Began offering community programs to be able to provide discounts to neighborhoods that sign up as few as 15 homes at once. Some have signed up 75 -100 neighbors together. Very successful. Better density in routes, allows more affordable services.

#### Municipal programs – curbside collection (Town of Chevy Chase, what MoCo is piloting now)

- Fully subsidized Town of Chevy Chase has achieved 40-50% participation after 5 years; Falls Church (residents pay first \$6) has achieved a lower participation rate.
- All municipalities have been opt-in, not mandatory.
- Some communities use drop-off locations (e.g., City of College Park); typically start with one bin, then additional ones in that location, and add new bin locations as activity grows

- Every time – interest builds with experience (neighbor effect) and participation grows
- Commercial** – also growing again after dampening impact of covid. Steady growth across all sectors.

2) **Education:** Getting people to sign up is their primary form of education.

- Focus on how important and easy it is – simple, convenient, affordable.
- Active social media presence and blog; do media announcements as well.
- On the commercial side, other types of important education, such as staff training.

3) **Contamination issues**

- What is “contamination” depends on facility and desired quality of the finished compost; e.g., compostable bags are contaminants in some facilities, may be undesirable for some end products.
- Residential – because all are opt-in, and the customer is paying extra – streams are really clean.
- Drivers identify contamination at stops when possible; we can refuse to collect if severe issues.
  - They take pictures to share when there’s contamination.
  - New program – apprenticeship to help train new people to be certified compost operators.
  - Cleaner Loads Project – CC program to educate people and reduce contamination volume.

4) **Fleet management** – have range of vehicles for residential & commercial collection routes.

- Would love to buy electric trucks, but impossible now. Hard to get regular trucks due to global supply chain issues.
- Small and midsize companies will be last in line to get a new truck without support from the government. And it will cost \$800K (just for truck, not including retrofitting of other equipment that is necessary to support electric fleet).

5) **Organics processing facilities**

- CC dual mission – divert food waste and improve health of the soils through compost use.
- Composting vs. anaerobic digestion – both are net positives, but CC focuses on composting – it’s natural, easy, quick to implement, and can handle a larger variety of product (i.e., greasy pizza boxes)
- CC facility business model: setting up Compost Outposts (a proprietary process) on farm land; promoting circular economy, reduces routing costs. <https://compostcrew.com/compost-outpost/>
  - Compost Crew pays a leasing fee to the farm.
  - In operation: One Acre Farm, where they compost food scraps from the surrounding communities on less than 5,000 square feet for the whole facility.
  - Next two Compost Outpost facilities pending within a month: Butlers Orchards and EcoCity Farms.
  - They have a pipeline of 10-15 additional farms
- Maryland State Permit requirements still apply.
- Fast and relatively inexpensive – built in one month and tripled in size over a few months.

6) **Opportunities and challenges for developing new composting facilities in MD?**

- **Meeting local zoning requirements tends to be more difficult at large-scale facilities than getting state permits.**
  - Some facilities are in planning mode – have state permit, but difficulties with county permit.
  - Can get permits in industrial zones – but that property is priced too high.
  - If on agriculture land, as an accessory use to farming, composting is permitted within limits.
  - With NIMBY atmosphere, it can be risky to try to get conditional use permits from county..
  - State Dept. of Environment – pretty easy to work with them and obtain permit, but permitting process is too costly for facilities over 5000 SF on small farms; smaller sized facilities on farms do not require a permit.

- Seen momentum to relax constraints with on-farm composting in MoCo. This should continue.
- **Public-private partnerships are important** to help grow capacity quickly (adds bandwidth to government staff, allows private investments, supports innovation)
- **Policies:**
  - Having economic incentives helps!! Especially PAYT/SAYT
  - Policies to support the sector – diversion mandate good, but implementation details unclear.

### Questions /Discussion

#### **Why are more farms not doing what One Acre Farm is doing?**

- Mostly it's a break-even proposition for a farm
  - Need access road and a concrete pad for mixing: such an investment poses challenges to farms
    - One Acre Farm received small infrastructure grant from MARBIDCO (<https://www.marbidco.org/>)
- Office of Ag is a huge ally in promoting this.

#### **Did you encounter resistance to composting at One Acre Farm due to concerns about odor or truck traffic?**

- Truck traffic is not a concern; odors are almost nonexistent because the site is managed properly.

#### **Benefits:**

- Having a distributed system gets around some of the need for one giant facility.
- You can *SEE* this recycling – compared to glass, metal, plastic, etc. This helps with behavior change, which helps other recycling programs.

#### **More on economics:**

- Finding qualified workers is difficult across the board (drivers, diesel mechanics, etc.)
- Most labor is for decontamination and mixing (one process).
- Financing is fee-based primarily; grants are for specific investments. One-Acre Farm Compost Outpost is a cash flow positive operation.
- Key City Farm - Frederick County has more lax rules and lower land costs.
- Very good business models across the country.

#### **What is potential for further capacity development of on-farm composting in MoCo?**

- Hard to say, but compared to trash and recycling – there is no shortage of opportunity.
- On capacity side, everything needs to complement each other. A larger facility still needed.
- Schools need to compost more. Some have shown success. But they don't have funding for that, so they are trying to fit it into their waste management process.

#### **Potential federal funding sources for organics processing capacity are now available (Heidi)**

- New federal infrastructure bill (what is in it for organics processing?)
  - EPA is looking for partners to get \$ out the door
- USDA is building regional rural development centers: rural community workforce development; marketing local/regional food systems
- EPA announced that one of the big areas of focus is expanding markets for recycled goods: If the perceived value of product increases, then the businesses will grow.

### New Elections

- Heidi nominated Carol Jones to serve as Chair, and Robin Barr seconded. No objections. Robin Barr will continue to serve as Vice Chair.
- Robin Barr nominated and Ellen Ryan seconded Adam Diamond to serve as Secretary. There were no objections to Adam serving in this role.
- For the first time in a while, all 3 positions are filled.

## **UPDATES FROM RECYCLING AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DIVISION STAFF – David Frank/Lisa Shine**

### **Curbside Organics Pilot is working pretty smoothly**

- It is week 7 for household organics recycling in Silver Spring, with 425 households participating.
- Started Dec. 7 in Potomac with 250 homes.

### **Contact for School programs**

- Food scraps recycling – Lynne Zarate, head of Sustainability Efforts for MCPS.

## **UPDATES FROM SUBCOMMITTEE:**

### **County Council Revisions to 10-year Plan prior to submission to MDE: (Carol)**

- County Council identified the issue of consolidation and closing the incinerator as requiring more study before action is taken, in its acceptance *with revisions* of the **COMPREHENSIVE TEN-YEAR SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN, CY 2020 – CY 2029**.
- Please see the memo from the Transportation & Environment Committee at this link: [https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2021/20210921/20210921\\_4.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/col/2021/20210921/20210921_4.pdf). See in particular, discussion of RRF closure and subdistrict consolidation - p. 2 of the cover letter and pp. 3-5 of the longer memo that follows the cover letter.
  - SWAC sent a letter to the County Council supporting consolidation on September 20, 2021, as well as supporting consolidation in several letters on the proposed budgets.

## **UPCOMING MEETINGS AND ADJOURNMENT**

- Next meeting is February 2, 2022 and will be held virtually.
- Peter Ettinger, Chief Development Officer, BioEnergy DevCo will be a guest speaker.
- Lisa requested the Committee send in writing updates sought from staff for the next meeting.

Motion to adjourn was made by Carol Jones, seconded by Adam Diamond. Meeting adjourned at 7:35 pm.

## **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 Recovery Facility		
MML	Maryland Municipal League		
OLO	Office of Legislative Oversight		
PAYT	Pay As You Throw		
RRF	Resource Recovery Facility		
RRMD	Recycling & Resource Management Division		