

Philadelphia SWRAC Goal-Setting Subcommittee: Meeting Notes from 1/7/2016

Members Present:

Michelle Feldman, Maurice Sampson, Jack Embick, Andrew Sharp, Mike Giuranna, Phil Bresee, Carlton Williams, Scott McGrath

Meeting Notes:

The subcommittee approved the meeting notes from the December 15th meeting.

News & Updates:

- Staff provided overview of materials shared with subcommittee, which included program data distributed at the December meeting, and media stories related to recycling and solid waste goals-setting.
- Staff communicated that PA DEP responded positively to the possibility of using Act 101 Section 901 grant monies for a new MSW characterization study.
- Staff will continue to identify goals and objectives from other jurisdictions, and share findings of interest with subcommittee.

Discussions:

- *Recyclables distribution* – Staff provided a bar chart that detailed the distribution of recyclables tonnages towards the Act 101 recycling goal. The chart confirmed that while the overall (residential, commercial and C&D) recycling and diversion rate has hovered between 44 and 50 percent during the past five years, materials such as scrap metals and C&D make up the largest share of the diverted tons. This suggests that there is room to capture additional materials such as paper, cardboard and organics.
- *Zero Waste and Sustainable Materials Management* – The committee discussed different interpretations of zero waste and whether waste-to-energy (WTE) technology should be considered. Staff reported that a number of high-profile corporate zero waste goals include WTE, while many cities and counties with zero waste goals include some versions of WTE or thermal conversion towards the goal. Staff reported that they were still compiling information or examples of zero waste goals from other jurisdictions and entities.

Subcommittee members and staff also discussed “sustainable materials management” (SMM) which is a newer concept that assesses the impact of resources throughout their lifecycles, not just at the “end of the pipe.” US EPA and organizations such as GreenBlue have become advocates of SMM as opposed to zero waste.

Staff and subcommittee members also discussed broader (i.e. state) policy initiatives and support that are necessary to effectively pursue zero waste, including product stewardship, deposit legislation, as well as more local actions such as green procurement and materials bans.

Staff spoke about the increasingly unpredictable nature of the MSW stream and indicated that goal-setting, whether aspirational or pragmatic, has become much more difficult. Subcommittee members suggested that many other public policy goals have goals of zero, including the City’s “Vision Zero” goals, which focus on traffic and pedestrian. Members said that the public understands that such goals are aspirational and are not necessarily supposed to be taken literally.

Other Comments:

- Subcommittee members emphasized that the SWRAC should serve as an advocate for resources necessary to achieve goals.
- The Streets Department should use strategic goals and objectives to frame annual budget requests.
- Subcommittee members acknowledged that fiscal realities will greatly influence goal-setting and resource availability.
- Subcommittee members discussed the prevalence of C&D materials in the City's residential MSW stream, and debated possible actions.

Recommendations:

- The subcommittee recommended that distinctions be made between zero waste and zero landfill¹. Subcommittee members recommended that a zero waste goal to be achieved by 2035 be established (which is consistent with the City's comprehensive plan).
- The goals and objectives, as well as certain milestones will also need to be sequenced with Greenworks 2.0, as well as potential Kenney Administration goals (4-8 years).
- The subcommittee recommended that the plan should evaluate the resources necessary to achieve goals, and establish incremental benchmarks and milestones.

Next Meeting:

The next subcommittee meeting will be held on January 21st at 2 p.m. in the Municipal Services Building.

¹ The primary solid waste goal in the Greenworks plan was a 70 percent diversion from landfill.