

MEETING MINUTES: City of Philadelphia Solid Waste and Recycling Advisory Committee (SWRAC)

DATE: June 22, 2017

ATTENDEES:

SWRAC Members

Fern Gookin, Revolution Recovery (co-chair)
Michelle Feldman, Keep Philadelphia Beautiful (co-chair)
Dominic McGraw, Office of Sustainability
Vivian Van Story, Community Land Trust
Maurice Sampson, Clean Water Action

Others Present

Sara King, Penn
Mike Dougherty, Wheelabrator
Amy Cornelius, Citizen
Logan Welde, Clean Air Council

City Staff/Consultants

Denise Diorio-McVeigh, Recyclebank
Erin Cartwright, Recycling Office/Recyclebank
Everett Burgess, Recycling Office/Recyclebank
Marisa Lau, Streets Dept/Recycling Office
Haley Jordan, MDO
Nic Esposito, MDO
Laura Cassidy, Prisons
Daniel Lawson, Parks and Rec

Call to order/introductions:

The meeting was called to order by SWRAC co-chairs Fern Gookin and Michelle Feldman at 3:10pm.

May Meeting Minutes:

Meeting minutes from the May SWRAC meeting were approved by voice vote. Denise Diorio-McVeigh will be added to the attendee list.

Informational Items and Announcements:

- M. Lau reported that the Streets Dept and PADEP have come to an agreement on how to address comments on the City's draft plan. The City will submit the final draft plan this summer.

- M. Lau gave an update on recycling outreach activities over the last month. PRO helped provide recycling training to Prisons managerial staff as part of a renewed effort to increase diversion. Prisons is currently recycling 300 tons per year and recently obtained a new recycling truck. PRO also sponsored a breast cancer awareness walk called the Sista Strut in its inaugural year in Philadelphia. SWEEP tabled for PRO at the finish line.
 - M. Sampson asked for clarification on the current strategy for promotional advertising, including the expected results of these campaigns. M. Lau noted that the recycling advertisements released this spring were planned as part of a larger campaign this year, differing from years past. N. Esposito added that the larger campaign has helped prime the public to receive information about new zero waste and litter free policies and programs.
 - The online registry of drop-off locations for plastic film recycling on the Streets website is out of date. L. Welde called locations to confirm and found at least thirty that do not offering plastic film recycling. He also noted that those locations that do offer recycling should be checked to ascertain whether materials actually get recycled.
- N. Esposito thanked the SWRAC for their hard work over the last few months. He announced that the June meeting of the Zero Waste and Litter Cabinet went well, and all recommended actions for waste reduction and diversion were accepted. According to the current timeline the action plan will be made public in early August; progress reports will follow annually in September.
- M. Feldman announced that the Mayor’s Office will conduct a Government and Advocacy 101 training at the SWRAC meeting next month. In August, a planning meeting for the SWRAC focused on organizational governance will be held instead of the general meeting; please contact the co-chairs if you would like to participate. General SWRAC meetings will be every other month starting in September, to allow for meeting planning in between.
- F. Gookin announced that she will be part of a panel on the future of recycling and Act 101 held by the Pennsylvania Resources Council next Thursday in Newtown Square.

Group activity and discussion

A group activity was conducted to help develop the concept of a business zero waste partners program. The recommendations made will be taken into consideration by the Streets Department as it moves forward with program development.

A summary of the discussion is below; see the “ZWP Business SWRAC activity” document for more details:

- Use a simple and clear certification process similar to LEED program

- Businesses sign up or take a pledge to become a partner and are assigned a level (such as bronze, silver, gold) reflecting progress toward becoming zero waste. For example see B Corp, NYC food service inspections, San Francisco.
- Show business progress using benchmarks such as new City diversion rate (when calculated) or rate of change over time
- Prioritize getting businesses of all types and sizes to join
- Create equitable processes to enable all businesses to actively participate, and equally benefit from program incentives
- Sidebar discussion on how to encourage/discourage restaurants from using certain types of compostable tableware until more processing options are available in the area
- General consensus reached on the best way to structure program tiers; see the document entitled “ZWP Business SWRAC activity” for more details
- During program design, consider what staff resources will be available for tracking participation and communicating with businesses
- Vet language used to describe zero waste actions for clarity and accessibility
- Capitalize on existing connections with City businesses (such as Recyclebank rewards partners) to grow program
- Use program to build new connections between businesses and hyper local organizations (eg CDCs, RCOs, libraries, rec centers, schools)
- Outreach and program incentives
 - Have local purchasing organizations and business organizations promote program; also engage manufacturers
 - Promote with testimonials/case studies from actual businesses
 - Conduct outreach by leveraging sustainability trends in consumer buying
 - Reward participating businesses with City recognition and possibly tax credits or discounts on utility bills
 - Support organizations’ cleanup activities (like waterways cleanups) with specialized equipment loans from City

The group also discussed new policy initiatives that would encourage businesses to take additional zero waste actions:

- Codify the use of reusable containers in restaurants, similar to prescription pill bottle refills
- Create a City sustainable materials management / circular economy working group to engage the business community and grow the recycling industry in Philadelphia
- Educate consumers about e-waste processors and recycling services
- Develop new uses in Philadelphia for hard-to-recycle materials like cigarette butts

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:45 pm.