



SPU Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC)

February 4, 2015 Meeting Notes
Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue

Room 5965

5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

Chair: Heather Levy

Vice-Chair: David Della

Committee Members & CAC Staff	Present?	SPU Staff & Guests	Role
Dan Corum	N	Tim Croll	SPU Presenter, Solid Waste LOB Division Director
David Della	Y	Liz Fikejs	SPU Presenter, Textiles Recycling
Ben Grace	Y	Quinn Schweitzer	Guest
Katie Kennedy	Y	Jamie Lee	Guest
Heather Levy	Y	Holly Griffith	Guest
Rodney Proctor	Y	Jasmine Ramgotra	Guest
Joseph Ringold	N	David Christensen	Guest, PHSKC
Stephanie Schwenger	Y, by telephone		
Chris Toman	Y		
Heidi Fischer, CAC Program Support	Y		
Dick Lilly, Policy Liaison	N		
Sheryl Shapiro, Program Manager	Y		

PLEASE NOTE ACTION ITEMS ARE V MARKED AND HIGHLIGHTED IN YELLOW

Regular Business

- Committee Members, staff, and guests introduced themselves.
- The January meeting notes are approved.

Update on Implementation of Composting Requirement, Hans Van Dusen

As of January 1st, food waste must be placed in the compost bin and kept out of the garbage.

- We've put the word out to customers in numerous ways, including notices on the front of bills, inside bills, and in newsletters, brochures, electronic communications, and social networking.
 - We've sent notices to all multifamily unit managers and to all businesses.
 - We will send additional notices to all customers in March.
 - We've had a lot of free media coverage on the new requirement.

- We've also purchased some media coverage in print (including ethnic media) and some television spots.
- The most recent survey we've done indicates that awareness of the new requirement is at 96%.
- From January until July, customers who put food waste in the garbage will get a red reminder notice to put it in the compost.
 - Our garbage haulers gave out 3,000 notices in January – 1,000 in the first week, and 500 in the last week.
 - We are working with the haulers from both Cleanscapes and Waste Management to apply consistent criteria in giving the reminder notices to customers.
 - Tim Croll noted that the media has taken an interest in the red color of the reminder notices, suggesting that it might be shaming customers in front of their neighbors. Tim asked SWAC members their thoughts on the color.
 - Committee Members noted that a bright color stands out, however, red might be aggressive.
 - Another member noted that customers who do not speak English are more likely to consider a red notice important enough to call the number listed on it for translation of the notice.
 - Hans noted that we've already printed up 30,000 of the red notices, so any color change considerations would be tabled until they were used in order to avoid waste.

Some Questions and Comments from the Committee:

- Question: Is SPU keeping track of who gets a reminder notice?
 - Answer: Yes. Right now it's not necessary, but it will be in July when we start giving fines.
- Comment: We should keep track of whether reminder notices and later, fines, are occurring more in specific neighborhoods.
- Comment: I don't think you can emphasize enough that the approach of warnings and then fines for compost in the garbage is the same thing that has been done for recycling in the garbage for several years.
- Question: How many customers are getting reminder notices?
 - Answer: About 1%.
- Question: When there are fines, how much will it be?
 - Answer: Fines will start in July, and each instance of compost in the garbage will be \$1.
- Question: Are you getting a lot of calls about the new requirement?

- Answer: No, not a lot, and very few from people speaking languages other than English. The Solid Waste Division is implementing a number of other changes now, and has been getting a lot of calls with orders for bigger compost bins.
- Comment: Some non-English speakers come from places where they are afraid of government, and are therefore not likely to call.
- The Chair noted that there is significant SWAC interest in the new compost requirement, and it might be helpful if Hans could give the Committee an update every other month. Another Member suggested that an update in June, right before fines start in July, would be useful.

Briefing on SPU's RFP for New MRF Contract: Hans Van Dusen, SPU

- SPU is currently reviewing proposals from recycling service providers for a new contract in 2016. We received the proposals in January and hope to select a vendor or vendors by March.
- The selection criteria are listed on the RFP (see the SPU website). The contract will be for processing approximately 80,000 tons of recyclable material, mostly from residential customers (most business recycling is handled on the open market and is not part of the contract).
 - Respondents can bid on all or half of the 80,000 tons.
- SPU will consider modified terms of the RFP if they help to improve our services and/or reduce our costs, but basic performance requirements must be met.
 - We are adding used cooking oil to the materials for collection.
 - Electronic waste will continue to be collected for a fee if arranged for ahead of time.
 - Used motor oil can continue to be placed next to the cart.
- The dynamic value of commodities can make the MRF contracts a bit complex.
 - SPU will cover fluctuations and take the full market value. This is a slight shift in our approach and we hope it provides more clarity while reducing risk.
 - The RFP has wage and benefit requirements. Sorters for MRFs tend to be temporary employees; however, sorters for SPU's materials must be regular employees, with benefits and a living wage.

Some Question and Comments from the Committee:

- Question: SPU ensures that the MRF gets the same amount for a ton regardless of the market value?
 - Answer: Yes
- Question: How long is the contract?
 - Answer: We asked for prices for 5-10 years.
- Question: If the market for a particular material is bad, can the MRF sit on the materials?
 - Answer: They may stockpile modest amounts, but the contract prohibits putting materials into a landfill.

- Question: Might this be a time to renegotiate how plastic bags are handled by the MRFs?
- Answer: That’s an alternative that a respondent could propose. The current way of handling plastic bags – putting them in the bin in a clear plastic bag – will at least be maintained. We’ve banned plastic bags in Seattle and have seen fewer of them in the recycling.

Update on Textiles Recycling: Liz Fikejs, SPU Resource Conservation

- Liz visited SWAC last fall to talk about the new textiles recycling program and is back to give an update. She passed out a summary of the program, which is called Threadcycle, and is a partnership between SPU and King County.
 - Some King County suburban cities have curbside textile recycling collection, so messaging about this new program will advise these residents to check their cities’ guidelines.
- The Environmental Protection Agency has estimated that 95% of the textiles that are currently thrown away could be recycled or reused.
- Plenty of folks give gently used items to collectors (places like Goodwill, Value Village, and other re-sale outlets), and are not aware that worn, ripped, and damaged items can also be given and recycled. Single items such as socks, shoes and gloves are also accepted.
- We already have collectors who will accept these damaged textiles at drop off locations (or with customer arranged pick-ups), and now we just have to educate the public that they can donate them.
- St. Vincent de Paul opted out of the program because of their smaller broker base, but other major collectors have joined, and they have updated their websites to make it clear that they accept worn, ripped, and damaged items in addition to those gently used.
- The program will be promoted in social media, featured in SPU’s Curb Waste & Conserve April newsletter, and advertised on some smaller, more affordable billboards.
 - We’re also using Google ad words, which will advertise the program when people are doing searches for collectors, and Facebook ads targeting moms and families.
 - An article has been included in SPU’s “At Your Service” bill insert

Some Questions and Comments from the Committee:

- Question: Will the program be advertising in schools?
- Answer: We’re hoping to promote to schools after the launch.
- Liz asked SWAC Members for ideas on how to continue getting the word out about Threadcycle.
 - One Committee Member suggested placing posters in school libraries.
 - He also noted that people may pass by billboards too quickly to be able to fully read them.
 - Liz responded that the content of billboards has been pared down, and the hope is that people will go by them numerous times and become familiar with the message.
 - Another Member suggested advertising in buses and on the outside of buses.

- Another Member asked about advertising in languages other than English.
 - Liz noted that the program plans to start with Spanish speakers this year, and will be expanding to additional languages.
- Another Member suggested more drop boxes for used textiles.
 - Liz noted that the collectors continue to provide the drop boxes, and some of them are putting stickers with information about Threadcycle on them.
- Another Member noted that she loves the visuals, and the campaign is looking good. She suggested promoting the program to the Cool Moms network.

Briefing on Recent Joint CAC Meeting: David Della, SWAC member and Sheryl Shapiro, CAC Program Manager

The Vice Chair and Program Manager gave an overview of the January 13 Joint CAC Meeting.

- The meeting discussed the implementation of the Strategic Business Plan (SBP), a six year plan that connects rates to services and projects, and commits SPU to an average yearly 4.6% rate increase across all lines of business (LOBs).
- Each of the three Committees (SWAC, CDWAC, and WSAC) was asked to identify a list of 10+ items of interest from the list of 71 SBP Action Items. SWAC chose:

SWAC's 10+ Items:

Focus Area Grouping: Customer

- A-25, Service Equity
- A-26, Web Presence
- E-02, Update External SPU Website
- E-03, Improve Customer Call Center

Focus Area Grouping: Protect Health & Environment

- E-05, Create a Strategic Regulatory Interface Management
- E-33, Establish a Standard Environmental Management System

Focus Area Grouping: Transform the Workforce

- A-20, Employee Performance Management Program
- E-44, New HR Information System Software
- A-22, Leadership Development
- E-36, Clear Roles & Responsibilities; Org Chart and Job Description Updates

Focus Area Grouping: OpEx – Service Quality

- A-10, Comprehensive Emergency Plan for Maintaining and Restoring Essential Services in Emergencies

Focus Area Grouping: OpEx – Financial Strength

- A-13, Require New Developments to Pay for a Share of the Utility's Systems Resulting from Growth

Focus Area Grouping: OpEx – Technology Planning

- A-16, Technology Services

Focus Area Grouping: OpEx – Strategy Effectiveness

- E-06, Corporate Business Planning Function

- E-34, Update Levels of Service to Reflect Service Targets Based on Customer Expectations and Mandated Services
- The meeting also discussed the role of the CACs in implementing the SBP. Each Committee gave the following input:

Report Results re: CAC Roles

- CDWAC reported the following possible CAC roles:
 - Being informed
 - Informing/sharing information with community
 - Participating in district-based election discussions
 - Helping to shape the Communications Plan
- Content
- Message
- Format
- Outreach locations
- Conducting outreach/facilitation
 - “Beta” testing public outreach format/materials
 - Communicating with City Council
 - Video-taping members on field trips (previous video was staff-centered) – Seattle Channel
- WSAC reported that they agreed with the roles listed in today’s presentation, and were especially interested in field trips, community outreach, and discussing the SBP overall.
 - They noted that climate change seemed a good topic for outreach.
 - They also wanted more information about SPU’s reorganization around the LOBs as it becomes available, and are eager to see the implementation schedule of the 71 action items, which will drive their role in implementation.
- SWAC reported that they have a couple of members who are beginning to work on the Committee’s community engagement proposal.
 - The Committee wants to better understand the role of CACs in taking information to the community and in bringing information from the community back to SPU.
- The Program Manager explained that the next step is for SPU to complete the SBP implementation plan for 2015; it will be submitted to City Council at the end of March. The implementation schedule will be shared with the CACs at the next Joint CAC meeting, which will likely be in April.
 - ✓ We will be sending out a doodle poll to the CACs soon to help us identify a date. We will also talk more at the April meeting about how the CACs can be involved in the public engagement piece of the SBP implementation.

- ✓ The Program Manager asked SWAC members to please keep the 4th Wednesday of every month penciled in for possible Joint CAC meetings.

Tonnage and Contract Costs, Including Composting, Tim Croll

- Tim referred to the three tables of garbage tonnage included in the handout.
 - All previous years shown had more tons of garbage going to landfills than 2014.
 - The decrease in garbage tons from 2007 to 2010 is mostly a result of the economic recession, but recycling also played a role.
 - Some of the decrease from 2013 to 2014 is due to the temporary closure of the North Transfer Station.
 - We've hit a plateau, as you can see from the garbage tonnage from 2011 to now, which is why we've implemented the compost requirement.
- Tim moved on to refer to the tables in the handout "Solid Waste Contracts – Tons and Dollars – 2014 YTD."
 - With regard to the "Tons Processed" table, recycling is up three percentage points from 2013. Organics (food and yard waste) is down 2%, which could just be a result of variations in the weather resulting in less yard waste.
 - With regard to the "Market Risk Share" table, credit was less in 2014 than in 2013. Note that the net payment to Rabanco is actually about \$1.25 million when adjusted for the market risk credit. Contractor payments to Waste Management for disposal are down from 2013. Organics processing contracts costs are up 37%, and total contract costs are up 2%.
 - With regard to the "December Organics" table, in December of 2014 we processed 7,505 tons of compost, while in December 2013 we processed only 4,899 tons. This could be related to our recent media blitz about the new composting requirement.
 - Projecting this increase of approximately 2600 tons per month forward, we would expect to collect approximately 31,000 more tons of compost for the year. Our goal for the compost requirement is an increase of 38,000 tons of compost per year, so this projected increase looks good.
 - However, if the tonnage from December of 2013 was unusually low, contrasting the December 2014 tonnage with the December 2013 tonnage may not provide an accurate forecast. Therefore, the table compares the average December tonnage for 2009 – 2013 with that from December 2014. This indicates an increase in December 2014 of 1,632 tons of compost, and a projected increase for the year of 19,584, which would still be good for the compost requirement's first year.
 - These numbers only reflect curbside residential collection, and some yard waste from self-haulers. Most commercial food waste is handled by the private sector.
- Question: What amount of compost tonnage would be considered a success for SPU?

- Answer: Any number that allows us to divert more than 60% of waste from the landfills.
- Question: What is the target tonnage of compost to get above the 60% mark?
- Answer: Ultimately we hope to get 38,000 tons from the new requirement. In 2013 we needed only 28,000 tons to move from the landfill to recycling/composting to have made our 60% goal. We expect the compost requirement to be a big factor in moving us above the 60% mark. We also expect our new construction and demolition recycling requirements to make a significant difference. Textiles recycling through Threadcycle could also be a nice pick up.
- Question: Can we see how King County's numbers compare with SPU's?
- Answer: Yes, we've done that in the past. Their numbers look similar to ours; they experienced the same decrease in waste generation during the recession.
- Comment: Seattle is the fastest growing city in the country, which means more new buildings and more solid waste.
- Answer: Waste generation has remained fairly steady despite growth. If new residents are good recyclers, they can even help to raise the waste diversion rate.

Ecology Solid Waste Plan Revision, Heather Levy

- This is the second revision of the plan for public review and comment.
- SWAC Members may comment as individuals, and we can decide now if we would like to comment as a group. The plan is a big document.
- One Member reported that he had read the executive summary and did not see any glaring issues. He asked whether the Committee might want to do something to encourage government agencies to reduce waste, perhaps by making a statement of encouragement of any plans that do help reduce waste.
- A brief discussion followed about the SWAC's sphere of influence and appropriate actions.
 - The Program Manager noted that the SWAC's primary focus is as an advisory group to SPU.
 - The Solid Waste Director added that SWAC might consider comments on issues originating in levels of government or agencies outside of SPU but that affect SPU.
 - The Chair noted that this topic is a good reminder to visit the King County SWAC.
- The Chair further noted that Ecology's plan emphasizes materials management, which is focus on a product's whole life cycle, while SWAC focuses on the end of life piece. She asked whether SPU might be moving in that direction as well.
 - The Solid Waste Director responded that the door is open, and we don't just want to look at the end of life. In Los Angeles, the corresponding department is known as the Department of Solid Resources, not Solid Waste. A few years ago we studied the environmental impacts we were avoiding by recycling, and the biggest one was the negative impact of using virgin materials. The hope of materials management is that the manufacturer will take responsibility for the product's end of life.

- The Chair noted that the Committee seemed inclined not to comment as a group, and reminded Members that they could comment individually if they chose.
 - The group agreed.

Review Paint Stewardship Letter: Heather Levy, SWAC Chair & Chris Toman, SWAC Secretary

- The bill for paint stewardship is going in front of the State legislature. The SWAC letter of support is very similar to last year's; Chris changed some cosmetic things and just needs to fill in the bill numbers. He is asking for the Committee's final approval to send it.
 - One Member noted that he thought approval had been given last month, and was concerned that the Committee be able to agree to an action and then have it move forward. Some brief discussion on this followed.
 - The Chair noted that the Committee needs to be clear about ownership and timing of a letter and/or project, and that all Members need to be connected to the group's document sharing site.
 - Another Member suggested that in some instances, the Committee might consider voting by email to authorize and action if time is a factor.
- In the case of the paint stewardship letter currently before the committee, Ben moved to accept the letter for sending, Rodney seconded the motion, and the Committee voted to send the letter.

✓ Chris will send it.

✓ The Policy Liaison recently emailed guidelines for SWAC letterhead; the Committee needs to be differentiated from the City. The Program Manager will clarify these guidelines in the next few days so that Chris can send the letter.

Around the Table

- Ben and Rodney passed around a handout, "Seattle SWAC Outreach Options." They reported on their subcommittee meeting about outreach.
 - They propose that each SWAC Member attend 4 community meetings a year, report any information back to the SWAC, and possibly return to the neighborhood meeting if questions came up that need to be answered.
 - Rodney noted that there are many organizations and it might be helpful to get a list and then prioritize. Members may also want to go out in teams, rather than individually.
 - The Program Manager noted that there is an official process for SPU communications, and that we need to consolidate messages for all lines of business (LOBs) and coordinate with the Strategic Business Plan (SBP).
 - Listening to community concerns is fine, but we'd like to develop more structure for messaging.
 - More information on this topic will be forthcoming at a Joint CAC meeting in the near future.
 - Some SWAC Members expressed a preference for moving forward with substantive action on outreach as soon as possible.

- ✓ The Chair proposes having 30-40 minutes on next month's agenda to brainstorm what neighborhoods and organizations the group would like to visit, with the hope that each Member would get two places to visit sometime in the next quarter.
 - She asked the Solid Waste Director to provide one page of community messages about solid waste.
 - ✓ Tim Croll agreed to do this.
 - The Committee agreed with this plan.
- Ben suggested that SWAC make a Google document where Members could fill in neighborhood information ahead of time.
 - ✓ The Program Manager will look into getting a presentation for SWAC on SPU's Sharepoint site to get more information about neighborhoods with regard to their SPU needs and services.
 - The Chair agreed this would be useful.
- One Member reported that on Friday, February 27th, the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) is having an all-day seminar nearby on waste prevention and diversion. The agenda looks interesting and she will post it the SWAC's Google group. The registration fee includes lunch.
 - ✓ The Program Manager will look into whether we have the funds available to send some SWAC Members to the seminar.
- The Program Manager reported that we've just finished the CAC Member Survey, and will be sending it to Members soon.
- ✓ She further reported that we are piloting a presenter feedback form, which we will also send out to SWAC Members soon.

Meeting adjourned, 7:39pm.