



**SPU Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC)**

**August 5, 2015 Meeting Notes**  
**Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue**

**Room 4901**

**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            | Becca Fong         | Solid Waste Outreach Coordinator         |
| David Della                        | Y            | Tim Croll          | Solid Waste Planning and Program Manager |
| Anna Dyer                          | Y            |                    |  |
| Ben Grace                          | N            |                    |  |
| Holly Griffith                     | Y            |                    |  |
| Katie Kennedy                      | Y            |                    |  |
| Jamie Lee                          | Y            |                    |  |
| Heather Levy                       | Y            |                    |  |
| Rodney Proctor                     | Y            |                    |  |
| Joseph Ringold                     | Y            |                    |  |
| Quinn Schweizer                    | N            |                    |  |
| Stephanie Schwenger                | By telephone |                    |  |
| Chris Toman                        | Y            |                    |  |
| Heidi Fischer, CAC Program Support | Y            |                    |  |
| Sego Jackson, Policy Liaison       | Y            |                    |  |
| Sheryl Shapiro, Program Manager    | Y            |                    |  |

**ACTION ITEMS FROM THIS MEETING:**

- ✓ Sheryl and Heidi will plan on sending a list of upcoming outreach events each month with the SWAC meeting agendas.
- ✓ Heather will attend the Columbia City Farmers Market on Wednesday, August 19<sup>th</sup>.
- ✓ Chris will attend the Ballard Farmers Market on Sunday, August 16<sup>th</sup>.
- ✓ Chris will try to get in touch with Dan to arrange a field trip to the zoo, and will also check in with other businesses to get possible dates for a backup field trip plan. Sego will assist.

## **Regular Business**

- Committee members and staff introduced themselves.
- June meeting notes are approved.

## **Packaging Ordinance Update, Tim Croll, Solid Waste Planning and Program Manager**

- SPU has spent a lot of time considering how to move forward on the packaging ordinance for quick service restaurants.
  - For now, we've decided to maintain the current ordinance requiring packaging to be either recyclable or compostable (rather than moving to all compostable).
  - Other parts of the ordinance are still being considered in consultation with stakeholders, including a provision that requires signage to better identify packaging as compostable or recyclable.
  - We should be ready to move forward in a couple of months.
- Sego Jackson, the Policy Liaison, noted that we are considering requiring signage for food courts at eye level, both where you pick up the service ware and where you discard it. The signs would have to include pictures.
- Tim added that the ordinance as it stands prohibits Styrofoam only for use in food packaging in Seattle. But Styrofoam can still be purchased and used outside of the city. We are considering whether to require some disclosure at the point of purchase letting people know that they cannot use it in Seattle for food packaging.
- ❖ Committee Member Question: What's the status of the provision addressing tinting of plastic bags (requiring compostable bags to be tinted green and prohibiting regular plastic bags from being tinted green)?
  - Answer: It's still in the proposed ordinance, but we do want further consultation with stakeholders.
- ❖ Committee Member Question: What's the timing on the proposing changes to the ordinance?
  - Answer: We hope to have a proposal by the end of this year.
- ❖ Committee Member Question: What's the timing for revisiting the provision to require all packaging to be compostable?
  - Answer: Perhaps in another year or so.

## **CPG Funding Update, Sego Jackson, Policy Liaison and Tim Croll**

- SPU receives funding each biennium from the Department of Ecology's Coordinated Prevention Grant (CPG) Program to support eligible utility activities in waste prevention and recycling.
- SPU received \$1.1 million from CPG for the 2013-15 biennium.
- The proposed 2015 – 17 grant amount was \$1.2 million, but, as expected and discussed in earlier SWAC meetings, the State Legislature cut CPG funding by roughly half, resulting in an allocation to SPU of \$500,000.

- CPG funds a variety of things for SPU, but no program is totally funded by CPG. The loss is significant, but we have other revenues to move forward and do not anticipate cutting programs or staff at this time.
- The CPG cuts have had big impacts in some places, like in rural counties. Some are hopeful that a supplemental budget may restore these grants, but this looks somewhat unlikely.
- ❖ Committee Member Question: Were any fee/rate increases implemented to make up for this funding loss?
- Answer: We already have a set of projected rate increases that were adopted in our Strategic Business Plan (SBP) and will be phased in over a number of years. These projections can change somewhat based on rate studies, when we consider all actual funding. The next rate study will be conducted next year, and any proposed rate changes would be implemented in 2017-2018.

**Discussion: Annual Recycling Report, Chris Toman, SWAC Secretary**

- Chris gave some background on SWAC's role in connection with SPU's Annual Recycling Report.
  - SWAC's duty is to review the report and write a letter to the Seattle City Council commenting on the report.
  - This year, Chris coordinated the process of getting Member input about the report and then he drafted the letter and submitted it to the City Council (next year he will wait and submit it with the Recycling Report, since it actually was received by Council before the report).
    - In this year's letter, SWAC expressed a strong preference for dedicating more resources to increase commercial recycling, since it is such a large part of the waste stream.
    - Tim Croll noted that the Annual Recycling Report for 2014 is posted online, and that he believes SWAC's letter is part of that posted document.
- Chris asked Members how they felt about the letter writing process this year.
  - One Member said that it was a vast improvement over last year. Chris laid out a clear timeline, and Tim Croll gave a high level summary of the report's findings. SWAC had good discussions online and over the telephone. She would like to see the process begun one month earlier next year so that more discussion can take place in meetings.
  - Another Member noted that the brief discussion at the June meeting helped the online discussion.
  - Another Member said that using Google Documents worked well in the online discussion. She also felt that SWAC was missing some needed information about the commercial sector which would have enabled them to make additional recommendations.
    - Tim Croll noted that while SPU has access to the residential and self-haul garbage and recycling data, data on the private recycling that's done in the commercial sector is harder to get. Some businesses submit their reports on

schedule, and some do not. However, we could probably get SWAC the information a month sooner for next year's process.

- Another Member noted that she agreed the process was a big improvement over last year's.
- ❖ One Member asked whether SPU has any thoughts about the recycling rate going down for the commercial sector?
  - Tim Croll responded that while the rate went down a bit, it was still in the expected range. We will be tracking to see how the compost requirement might affect the commercial recycling rate.
- ❖ One Member noted that in the past SWAC has also testified to the City Council's Seattle Public Utilities and Neighborhoods Committee, and asked whether SWAC should do this again this year.
  - Tim responded that the Council has not yet asked SPU to speak with them about the report, but if they do, SWAC's presence would be appreciated.
- SWAC Members thanked Chris for his work.

#### **Discussion: Outreach Events**

- Sheryl, the Program Manager, attended the Recycling Fashion Show. She gave a report and showed pictures from the event.
- Sheryl then handed out a list of upcoming SPU outreach events that SWAC Members might consider attending.
- Becca Fong, the Solid Waste Outreach Coordinator, explained how staffing an outreach table for SPU works.
  - There's usually an interactive activity and information on recycling and composting.
  - We often give away kitchen buckets for food scraps.
  - Some SPU staff will also be there, so SWAC participation would be supplemental, so even just one hour would be fine.
  - She added that SPU often conducts outreach at farmers markets, and this year we've offered information to the markets themselves to help manage their waste stream and their signage.
- One Member suggested that SWAC should discuss these event dates in regular meetings, with their calendars in front of them, rather than online.
- Sheryl noted that signing up for outreach events might also be managed with Google Documents.
- Another Member suggested that SWAC should get a list of outreach dates and pass around a sign-up sheet at each meeting.
- ✓ Sheryl responded that she and Heidi will plan on sending a list of upcoming outreach events each month with the SWAC meeting agendas.
- ✓ Heather said that she could attend the Columbia City Farmers Market on Wednesday, August 19<sup>th</sup>.

✓ Chris said that he could attend the Ballard Farmers Market on Sunday, August 16<sup>th</sup>.

- ❖ One Member asked about the value that would be added by having SWAC Members present at outreach events.
- Tim responded that the Members could make connections to different communities and help get the word out about things like the compost requirement.
- Another Member added that outreach events provide more touch points with the community so that SWAC can better represent their views.
- Sheryl added that Members can observe and interact and bring back information to the Committee. Sometimes community members have a more open reaction to SWAC Members than they might to SPU staff, which can be valuable in encouraging them to share feedback.
- Sheryl spoke briefly about other outreach venues, including the Mayor's Seattle at Work event that she had recently attended along with a CDWAC Member.

#### **Field Trips Discussion**

- SWAC has been interested in a field trip to the zoo, but this needs to be coordinated with Dan Corum, a SWAC Member who will soon be leaving the Committee and is not present tonight.
- Sego, the Policy Liaison, discussed possible field trips to Total Reclaim, which has new equipment for processing electronic materials, and Strategic Materials, which might be interesting for their glass sorting and recycling. SWAC could visit both businesses in one day and it would take approximately 3.5 hours.
- Sego also suggested the possibility of going to visit a Puget Consumers Co-op (PCC) using t the WISerg on-site food waste processing system, and then going to WISerg plant to see the liquid fertilizer processing system.
- Tim Croll suggested SWAC might also visit the North Transfer Station (which is still under construction).
- Last time SWAC took a field trip, Members visited two places in 2-3 hours, and then met up for dinner afterward.
- Chris suggested that SWAC should try to schedule the first field trip for September.
- ✓ Chris will try to get in touch with Dan to arrange a field trip to the zoo, and will also check in with other businesses to get possible dates for a backup field trip plan. Sego will assist.

#### **Composting Requirement Survey Results, Becca Fong, Solid Waste Outreach Coordinator**

- SPU did a survey in March of compost requirement awareness. Awareness levels were not as high or as equitable across the population as we would like.
  - About 75% of single family customers were aware of the requirement, and about 71% were aware of the fine for noncompliance.
  - But for non-white single family customers, only 62% were aware of the requirement, and 61% were aware of the fine.
  - In households with a primary language other than English, only 49% of single family customers were aware of the requirement, and 45% were aware of the fine.

- So SPU did a lot of targeted outreach, and just completed another survey in July. Awareness levels were higher and more equitable.
  - This time about 80% of single family customers were aware of the requirement, and about 74% were aware of the fine for noncompliance coming in 2016.
  - For non-white single family customers, 81% were aware of the requirement. This is up considerably from the 62% in March. 66% of non-white single family customers are aware of the fines for noncompliance, which is up from 61% in March.
  - In households with a primary language other than English, 82% of single family customers are now aware of the requirement and 61% are aware of the fine.
- Our 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter outreach focused on both the awareness and fines. The survey results indicate that awareness of the requirement is higher than that of the fines.
- This time the survey included in-person surveys as well as telephone surveys.
  - Many of these in-person surveys were conducted in languages other than English, working with community partner organizations. We also received a lot of good qualitative data about what's confusing about the food waste requirement and how to build partnerships to move forward on more effective outreach.
- We are still analyzing the demographics so that we can plan for more outreach before the next survey in October.
- Survey results for multi-family properties showed improvements in awareness of both the requirement and fines for noncompliance.
  - In March, awareness of the requirement was at 64%. In July, it increased to 76%.
  - In March, awareness of the fines for noncompliance was at 54%. In July, it increased to 68%.
  - These improved numbers may be the result of SPU's targeted outreach to people living in multi-family properties.
- The fines will directly impact single family homes, but fines will indirectly impact residents at multi-family properties, since the fines will go to property managers.
- Tim Croll explained that SPU's outreach about the requirement included a mailer to 92,000 households with more translated information.
  - We also sent out SPU's Curb Waste & Conserve brochure with more translated information to all SPU households.
  - He added that even without the data from the in-person surveys, awareness levels rose.
  - He further noted that SPU is spending \$1.5 million in 2015 on outreach on the compost requirement and fines for noncompliance.
  - SPU's consultant says that an awareness level of 80% is more than good. But SPU would like to do better, and Tim asked SWAC Members to weigh in on what the target for awareness levels.
    - One Member noted that she would like to see the awareness levels of fine specified for white single family homes, since the overall number of single family homes was at 74% awareness of the fines, which is significantly higher

than single family non-white (66%) and single family non-English primary language (61%).

- Some Members asked whether the survey had been done after the press coverage about the lawsuit concerning the compost requirement.
    - Tim Croll responded that yes, it happened to be done after some lawsuit press coverage.
  - One Member asked what impact any SWAC suggested target might have.
    - Tim responded that SPU was still considering targets and SWAC's input would be useful in those discussions.
  - Another Member said that any target is somewhat arbitrary, and the most important concern is equity among the groups.
  - Another Member suggested that there may be dual goals: an overall target to awareness, and a maximum differential between the groups.
  - Another Member suggested that the main concern may be how different income levels are impacted by the fines.
  - Another Member noted that SPU is already directing resources and actions to reducing the equity gap. Awareness of the requirement is already at 80% across single family groups. Getting to 80% awareness of the fines for noncompliance seems doable.
- Tim asked SWAC Members to go around the table and tell him if a target of 80% awareness of both the compost requirement and the fines for noncompliance (across all groups) would be sufficient to move forward with implementing the fines.
    - Chris: 75-80% is reasonable, with a spread among the groups no more than single digits.
    - Heather: A good target would be if the results for awareness of fines looked like the results for awareness of the requirement, with no more than 5% difference.
    - Stephanie: A target of 75% awareness is good. Even mid 60s is pretty high. SPU should use their resources to keep increasing that number going forward.
    - Joe: I'm really proud of the overall increase and the equity increase in awareness of the requirement. I'm confident we can do the same with the fines. Having all the numbers close would be my priority.
    - Katie: The numbers reflecting awareness of the requirement look good. The numbers reflecting awareness of the fines could be better. But I don't think it merits all of the resources that are being poured into it now.
    - Ann: The equity piece is most important.
    - Jamie: I would like the numbers reflecting awareness of the fines to be close to the numbers reflecting awareness of the requirement, with no more than a 3-4% difference.
    - Holly: Equity needs to go up. 75% is good for a starting point. Awareness may not increase until the fine is implemented. The fine is important and will be beneficial.
    - Rodney: I think this is a social and economic issue rather than a race issue. I'm most nervous about the multi-family awareness levels and practices. 75-80% awareness across all groups is good.

- David: The numbers reflecting awareness of the requirement look good, and I would like to see similar numbers reflecting awareness of the fines. Fines are the consequences of being unaware. If we close the gap on awareness of the fines, we reduce unfair impacts. Multifamily awareness is complex. SPU may need to work more with property owners.
- ❖ One Member asked whether SPU was doing outreach to businesses.
- Tim responded that we did not survey businesses about their awareness levels but we are working closely with them. Additionally SPU is doing targeted outreach to ethnic businesses with additional technical assistance to help them comply with the food waste requirement.
- Tim also clarified that once the fines for noncompliance are implemented, the one dollar fine may be imposed on a single family customer without a warning. Multi-family properties will receive two warnings before receiving a \$50 fine.
- ❖ One Member asked if Seattle Housing Authority customers were included in the survey results.
- Tim responded that they were not filtered out, so they are included.

#### **Food Waste Lawsuit, Tim Croll, Solid Waste Planning and Program Manager**

- SPU has been sued by some residents of Seattle alleging that the compost requirement violates privacy laws.
  - The plaintiffs are represented by the Pacific Legal Foundation, who describes itself as a conservative public interest law firm.
  - SPU is aware of Washington State’s privacy protections and consulted with our law department before implementing the compost requirement, who advise us that the requirement is in complete compliance with the law.
- SPU will defend the compost requirement.
- ❖ Committee Member Question: Is this lawsuit directed at only at organics (food waste) or also at recycling?
- Answer: The lawsuit is directed only at organics, even though SPU has required other items to be kept out of the garbage for the last 25 years, such as yard waste, sharps, unbagged Styrofoam packing peanuts, and, more recently, recyclable materials.
- ❖ Committee Member Question: Has SPU been sued for this before?
- Answer: SPU has been sued before, but not about this issue.
- ❖ Committee Member Question: Can the police look through garbage?
- Answer: They would need a warrant to do so.

- ❖ Committee Member Question: Will the lawsuit impact implementation of the fine?
- Answer: I don't believe so.
  
- ❖ Committee Member Question: Is this a publicity concern?
- Answer: Not so much in the local news.
  
- ❖ Committee Member Question: Might it have a positive effect of raising awareness of the requirement and the fines?
- Answer: Possibly.

**Transfer Station Collection Program and Organics Grinding, Tim Croll, Solid Waste Planning and Program Manager**

- SPU sends 60% of its compost to a processor in Grant County on the eastern side of the state (PacifiClean).
- Recently, the Department of Agriculture notified us that this is in conflict with apple maggot containment practices.
  - The rules prohibit the west side of the state from taking organics across the Pacific Crest unless it's ground up prior to transport, or the processor has an enclosed building.
  - Since PacifiClean could not meet these requirements, we have been sending our compostable material to a composter in Snohomish County (Lenz).
- PacifiClean wanted to resume processing our compostable material, so we are in a two week trial period of having a grinder at the South Transfer Station.
  - We're meeting with the South Park community to get feedback.
  - Inside the station the noise from the grinder is loud, but it seems to fade into the background a short distance away.
  - Noise and dust are potential concerns.
  
- ❖ Committee Member Question: If the two week trial goes well, PacifiClean will resume processing the material?
- Answer: Yes, they will keep processing 60% of our compostable material.
  
- There's also a new collection program at the South Transfer Station.
  - They've started accepting mattresses, drywall, asphalt, and metal (things that have been banned from the construction and demolition waste stream).
    - The box for dry wall is filling slowly.
    - There's a huge pile of mattresses already.

**Around the Table**

- David Della reported that Waste Management will be receiving a barge of marine debris from the tsunami in Japan. The debris was deposited by winds and currents along the remote coastlines of Alaska and Canada.

- The barge will arrive and unload the super sacks of marine debris on Waste Management's Seattle dock. In a few weeks, local environmental volunteer groups will sort the material for recycling at an event coordinated by Parley for the Oceans, a national non-profit focused on addressing threats to the world's oceans. Material Innovation Company, Bionic Yarn will then transform the sorted marine debris plastic into high-performance textiles and polymers. All remaining debris will travel via train to the Columbia Ridge landfill.
- Holly Griffith reported that while students at the University of Washington are offered help with recycling when they move out of dorms in June, the program does not provide assistance for those moving out in August.
- Jamie Lee reported that Little Saigon will be celebrating with their 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Festival on August 22.
- Sheryl Shapiro reported that the University of Puget Sound is hosting an exhibit called "Dirt? Scientists, Book Artists, and Poets Reflect on Soil and Our Environment." One of Sheryl's poems has been selected to be part of the exhibit.
- Heather Levy reminded SWAC Members that the SWAC listserve does not include SPU staff.

7:35pm meeting adjourned.