



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

**June 3, 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	Y	Marcia Rutan	SPU Community Recycling Program Manager
David Della	Y	Tim Croll	Solid Waste Planning and Program Manager
Ben Grace	Y	Anna Dyer	Guest
Holly Griffith	Y	Clifford Armstrong III	Guest
Katie Kennedy	Y		
Jamie Lee	N		
Heather Levy	Y		
Rodney Proctor	N		
Joseph Ringold	Y		
Quinn Schweizer	Y		
Stephanie Schwenger	Y, 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:**

- ✓ Marcia will get Sheryl the MFU brochure to pass out at the next SWAC meeting in August.
- ✓ SWAC Members should be a point of contact for MFU property managers and residents who are looking for more information about recycling and compost; can refer them to online information shown at the meeting.
- ✓ Heather will contact Marcia's staff about MFU outreach opportunities for SWAC.

- ✓ SWAC will write a letter about the Recycling Report.
  - ✓ May advise SPU on what sector to focus efforts (several members favored a focus on the commercial sector, since they generate the most material)
  - ✓ Chris will look use SWAC's letter from last year and add some things to make a draft on Google Docs before SWAC gets the Recycling Report's final numbers. SWAC Members will have a couple of weeks to review this version.
  - ✓ Chris will update the draft when SWAC gets the final numbers, and Members will have only about 2 days to review it.
- ✓ Tim/Vicky will check with the economists on the possibility of showing compost separated out from recycling for each sector.
- ✓ No meeting in July.
- ✓ SWAC Members should contact Jamie Lee directly if they want to be included in her considerations about target awareness levels.
- ✓ Heather will ask Jamie to send a message to SWAC's listserve after speaking with Tim about SPU's ideas for awareness targets.
- ✓ Heidi will email SWAC the Presenter Feedback Forms for the June meeting, since we ran out of time.
  - ✓ SWAC Members should fill them out for Vicky and Marcia, and send them by email to Heidi.
- ✓ Sheryl will email SWAC some outreach opportunities.

### Regular Business

- Committee members, staff and guests introduced themselves.
- May meeting notes are approved.

### Overview of Multi-Family Recycling Program, Marcia Rutan, SPU Community Recycling Program Manager

- Marcia referred to a handout, "Multifamily Food Waste and Recycling Program Briefing for SWAC."
- Almost half of Seattle's population lives in multi-family properties.
  - Multi-family for this purpose is defined as residential properties of five or more units that share containers, usually "dumpster" premises, including condominiums, apartments, fraternities & sororities, senior communities, nursing homes, rehab facilities, mobile parks, boat communities, residential portions of mixed-use buildings, etc.
- The program's purpose and target is to divert food waste from the garbage of over 5,000 MF properties and increase the recycling rate to 42.5% by 2015 and 54.3% by 2022.
- The 2014 rate is estimated at 34.6% (up from 28.7% in 2011).
  - We've seen a 6% increase in recycling rates in MF since 2011.
  - MF properties were required to have a compost cart and service beginning September 2011.
- The ordinance prohibiting food waste from the garbage took effect in January 2015, and applies to MF as well as single family homes.

- The Multifamily Food Waste and Recycling Program includes three strategies: technical outreach, education and training, and policies and laws.
  - Technical outreach is focused on providing telephone and in-person assistance to large properties, as well as the partnership with the SPU inspection team.
    - There are two types of collection service available for MF properties: 1) curbside, and 2) on-site, which is more expensive .
  - [http://www.seattle.gov/util/MyServices/FoodYard/BldgOwnersManagers\\_FoodYard/CartCostSize/index.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/util/MyServices/FoodYard/BldgOwnersManagers_FoodYard/CartCostSize/index.htm)
  - Education and training includes the Friend of Recycling and Composting program [http://www.seattle.gov/util/MyServices/FoodYard/BldgOwnersManagers\\_FoodYard/RecyclingSteward/index.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/util/MyServices/FoodYard/BldgOwnersManagers_FoodYard/RecyclingSteward/index.htm) and composting and recycling presentations delivered to MF resident at larger properties .
    - Interpreters are provided by request.
    - The “Where Does it Go” game successfully educates people about what goes in the recycling bin, the compost bin, and the garbage.
    - Because it doesn’t depend on literacy, this game is also an equity tool.
    - The FORC/MF customer hotline is 206-684-8717), and staff responds to email inquiries as well.
- The common barriers and problems for MF are:
  - Illegal dumping (big one)
    - To combat illegal dumping, property managers might consider additional signage, changing the cart’s location, or placing locks on the cart.
  - Turnover (Property managers as well as residents)
  - Space
  - Confusion or convenience issues
  - Resistance by property manager, facilities staff, or residents – ick factor, fear of pests
  - Lack of awareness or cart (usually due to turnover)
  - Recycling is still not working
- We recently completed a test project with 48 properties to find out if compostable bag dispensers would make a difference. This resulted in more material in the compost cart, fewer plastic bags, but not less contamination overall. A report will soon be ready.
- The Friends of Recycling and Compost (FORC) Program at [www.seattle.gov/util/apartmentfoodwaste](http://www.seattle.gov/util/apartmentfoodwaste) is to “train the trainer” and motivate key champions at properties to monitor and advocate for recycling and composting:
  - The first step is to sign up on-line, by paper, or by phone. The FORC is sent a green folder with information, brochures, and a pledge that lists action steps.
  - When the FORC completes the actions, signs off on the pledge and returns it to SPU, the property is given a one-time \$100 credit on their utility bill
  - If the FORC registers for and attends a FORC training (a separate action from the \$100 credit) s/he qualifies the property for free kitchen compost buckets for all units. (Due to

budget, no additional buckets will be provided in 2015.) (*New: It appears there is a possibility for more funding for buckets – keep posted!*)

- The FORC Program has been very successful.
  - Of the 5400 MF properties in Seattle, 1500 are signed up for FORC.
  - This year alone, the program gave away over 13,000 buckets.
  - We had 50 people at the last FORC training. Three trainings have been provided so far in 2015, in various neighborhoods.
- Educational materials and public information
  - Recycling and posters and flyers are available in 17 languages plus English.
    - The ordinance letter for residents is currently available only in English.
- People can also sign up to receive the Apartment/Condo Conservation Newsletter with interdepartmental information re: discounts, laws, workshops etc. for MF at <http://www.seattle.gov/util/aboutus/news/newsletters/>

Marcia Rutan is retiring by the end of July and a new staff person will be hired to continue the overall MF program.

SWAC can support FORC by:

- Informing property managers/residents about training and assistance options
- Helping at an educational presentation, training, or table
- Reading the materials so you're informed and can provide information to property managers/residents when appropriate
- Being a FORC if you live at a multi-family qualified property!

## SWAC Q & A

- ❖ Question: Can you tell us more about SPU's ability to provide sustained technical assistance to MF properties?
  - Answer: We focus on property managers. Jack Harris is the consultant working for SPU who provides technical assistance to the larger properties, and he's very experienced. Otherwise we also respond to phone inquiries and direct them to the contact center as needed.
- ❖ Question: Do you provide help with signage?
  - Answer: Yes, as well as cart placement and other considerations.
- ❖ Question: What does a MF resident do if s/he isn't given access to a compost cart?
  - Answer: They can contact us, and we advise them to contact the property manager as a first step. If that doesn't work, they call us back, or call the SPU Contact Center customer service line (206-684-7665). We may send a letter to the property manager advising her/him that we received a complaint, or we may send out an inspector.

- ❖ Question: SPU is selling compliance with the composting program as a way to avoid fees. Have you considered that rising rents may be erroneously attributed in part to these fees? Are you worried about losing the integrity of the argument?
- Answer: The compost requirement ordinance is focused on environmental impact as well as economic impact for the city. The MF project team wants to uphold the law because it's needed to move behavior change forward. We have received reports of property managers evicting tenants for not composting correctly, which is not the approach we support.
  
- ❖ Question: What percentage of people signed up for FORC trainings are low income, or from a minority community?
- Answer: We don't have that information, but we do provide assistance all over the city, and are currently focusing on the Rainier Valley East African. 96% of the MF properties have compost carts. A few are exempt because of space or because of an incapable resident population (mentally ill, drug addicts etc.). And sometimes carts go missing.
  
- ❖ Question: What is the best strategy to get residents to recycle?
- Answer: Lack of confidence can be a problem, so the "Where Does it Go" game helps a lot. Motivation to come to a training is varied, but we try to match it up with receiving a free compost bucket or at least cookies!
  
- ❖ Question: How does the "Where Does it Go" game work in a property with no community space?
- Answer: We only provide it at larger properties right now, but we are adaptable. We recently did it in a laundry room! We hope to get the training online so that anyone could do it.
  
- ❖ Question: How big does the building need to be to get a presentation?
- Answer: We like to have at least 20 people at the presentation, so that usually means at least 60-70 residents. Occasional exceptions are made if the population is primarily underserved.

### SWAC Steps

- SWAC is welcome to explore the website and contact Marcia with questions.
- Sego Jackson, the Policy Liaison, noted that Marcia was recently inducted into the Washington State Recycling Hall of Fame, along with Dick Lilly, the former SWAC Policy Liaison.
- ✓ Heather will contact Marcia's staff about MF outreach opportunities for SWAC.
- ✓ Marcia will get Sheryl the MF brochure to pass out at the next SWAC meeting in August.
- ✓ SWAC Members should be a point of contact for MF property managers and residents who are looking for more information about recycling and compost; can refer them to online information shown at the meeting.

## Recycling Report, Vicky Beaumont, SPU Solid Waste Strategic Advisor

- Vicky referred to the draft Recycling Report and the accompanying draft data charts and tables.
  - The charts report the amount of municipal solid waste (MSW) that is generated, disposed, and recycled for three sectors: single family, multi family, and self-haul.
  - Construction and demolition debris is not included in MSW.
  - Commercial numbers for 2014 were not yet available, and so are reported at 2013 numbers.
  - The single family sector is maintaining and slightly increasing their 70% recycle rate.
  - We continue to watch the multi-family sector, which is increasing but still at just 35%.
- SWAC is required to review the Recycling Report when it is completed and provide comments.
- The Committee has received the draft document for some early review.
- Vicky referred to a handout with a timeline for completion of the report.
  - She plans to send an update report to SWAC, with final numbers, by June 23.
  - She hopes to receive SWAC's letter by June 26.
  
- ❖ Comment: There's a lot of attention on the diversion rate, but tonnage is the real indicator.
- Vicky responded that the most gain is possible in the commercial sector because they generate the most material.
  
- ❖ One Member asked whether it might make sense for SWAC to recommend additional SPU staffing to address the commercial sector, since multi-family has 4 staff and commercial has 5, including inspectors.
- Vicky responded that we have done a lot of work with all sectors, focusing on outreach and education, and we could do more, but it's not just SPU staff because we also contract out some of the work.
- Tim added that in the commercial sector, most of the diversion in commercial restaurants is in the back of the house (where the managers and employees operate), but that the front of the house (where the customers are) is growing.
  
- ❖ One of the Members noted that she had recently worked in restaurants and saw a lack of composting in the back of the house. She added that some restaurants feel that composting is impractical.
- ❖ Another Member reported that she had heard numerous anecdotes about the back of the house just emptying all of the bins from the front of the house in the garbage because they are frustrated at customers' lack of appropriate sorting.
  - She suggested that a more detailed breakdown of the commercial sector's recycling rates (composting vs. other recycling) would be helpful.
- ❖ Another Member commented that restaurants have to provide a recycling bin if they are using recyclable packaging, and a compost bin if they are using compostable packaging.
- Tim confirmed that the type of container a restaurant is compelled to provide is based on what kind of packaging they are using.

- The self-haul sector's recycling rate is very low, at around 11%.
  - However, much of the self-haul tonnage is from large haulers like the University of Washington, Seattle Housing Authority, school districts, and parks who may be self-hauling only their garbage while having their recycling separately collected. If so, then their recycling shows up in commercial recycling rates.
  
- ❖ Comment: King County recently piloted a program of floor diversion at the transfer station.
- Tim responded that analyses have shown that if careful sorting is done, we can divert about 70% of that transfer station floor waste, but it is expensive to do so, and we are still doing the cost benefit analysis.
  
- Tim Croll provided an overview of the report:
  - While the numbers are not complete (meaning we are waiting for final numbers on the commercial sector), it is safe to assume that we will not be able to show that we achieved 60% recycling in 2014.
  - We can expect that the remaining gap will be such that it may be possible, but not certain that we will close it in 2015.
  - The main focus for the rest of 2015 will be broadening awareness of the composting requirement, prior to officially starting the fines in January of 2016. SPU anticipates an expenditure of \$1.5 million on outreach and enforcement for this effort in 2015. This will also increase the amount of food waste and compostable paper diverted from the landfill in 2015.
  - We are still evaluating the cost-effectiveness of diverting mixed construction and demolition debris from the transfer station floor for transportation and further sorting and partial recovery of recyclables.
    - We have found that indiscriminate transferring of these types of loads can result in recycling rates of perhaps only 30%, while careful transfer of only the larger pieces of material can result in 70% recycling.
    - We are analyzing the benefits vs. cost of this more careful approach and should have results by July 2015.
    - If it is found to be cost effective we will move to separate these materials on a more regular basis, increasing our self-haul recycling in 2015 and into 2016.
  - SPU is still considering whether or not to further restrict the quick-serve food industry to predominately compostable food service ware in 2016. If this is pursued, it will likely not have any significant effect on diversion in 2015.
  - Tim suggested that SWAC could weigh in on the following questions:
    - Is SPU's emphasis on promoting the composting requirement (while reiterating the 10-year old recycling requirement) the correct approach?
    - Is SPU's greater than usual outreach budget appropriate for the challenge or excessive?

- Are there some sectors that should be emphasized in this approach over other sectors?
  - Should SPU aggressively pursue post-customer self-haul C&D material sorting to help get to the 60% goal by 2015, even if it is not strictly cost-effective?
- Heather noted that SWAC did not need the final numbers to begin writing their comment letter.
  - ✓ Chris will look use SWAC's letter from last year and add some things to make a draft on Google Docs before SWAC gets the Recycling Report's final numbers. SWAC Members will have a couple of weeks to review this version.
  - ✓ Chris will update the draft when SWAC gets the final numbers, and Members will have only about 2 days to review it.
  - ✓ The letter may advise SPU on what sector to focus efforts (several members favored a focus on the commercial sector, since they generate the most material)
- ❖ One Member suggested that she would like to see the compost separated out from the recycling for each sector.
- ❖ Another Member agreed.
- ✓ Tim/Vicky will check with the economists on the possibility of showing compost separated out from recycling for each sector.

**Update re: Customer Awareness of Food Waste Composting Requirement, Tim Croll, SPU Solid Waste Planning and Program Manager**

- As Tim reported last month, the City of Seattle has suspended the fines for noncompliance with the composting requirement that were to have taken effect in July.
  - SPU recently received the results of a telephone survey on customers' awareness of the food waste composting requirement and fines. Half of those surveyed were contacted on a cell phone, and half on a landline.
    - Awareness levels were not as high 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.
    - We did not want to fine people who were not aware of the compost requirement.
    - Therefore, we suspended the fine and plan to do more outreach to publicize it.
- Last month SWAC discussed what the awareness levels should be from an equity perspective, and Jamie Lee, one of the Committee Members planned to look into it further, and her work is still in progress.



- SPU has had some internal discussions about it, but hasn't yet decided and would welcome some input from SWAC.
  - We are currently considering target awareness rates of 80-85% for the general population, 75-80% for communities of color, and 70-75% for non-English speakers.
- Tim passed out a chart depicting the food waste campaign's outreach schedule, which includes targeted outreach to traditionally underserved communities, as well as outreach to all SPU customers. The plan includes direct mail, paid media, earned media, community outreach, customer notices and assistance, and electronic media.
  - We will survey twice more as well, in July and again in October.
  - We will decide after October whether to go forward with fines or delay.
  - We continue to have drivers place yellow warning tags if they see compostable materials in the garbage.
- ❖ Question: How stringent does SPU plan to be in enforcing the fines once they go into effect?
- Answer: The collectors cannot study each can, but will eyeball the garbage. If 10% or more of the garbage is compostable material, the customer will be fined. But again, fines have been delayed for now.
- ❖ One Member commented that the recycling requirement had a very low enforcement rate (few fines were actually imposed).
- ❖ Question: How much is SPU spending on outreach about the food waste requirement?
- Answer: \$1.5 million this year.
- ❖ One Member commented that she had seen some spillover effect from the food waste requirement on the east side. More composting there, because people believed the requirement extended throughout the county, rather than just the city of Seattle.
- ✓ SWAC Members should contact Jamie Lee directly if they want to be included in her considerations about target awareness levels.
- ✓ Heather will ask Jamie to send a message to SWAC's listserve after speaking with Tim about SPU's ideas for awareness targets.

**CPG Update and Discussion, Tim Croll, SPU Solid Waste Planning and Program Manager**

- Segó Jackson, the Policy Liaison, reported that there had been no change in status in the expected CPG grant since last month's meeting: we still expect it to be 50% less.
- The Department of Ecology is forming a CPG workgroup, made up of an equal number of representatives from the east and west side of the state, which will meet for more than half a day on June 10.
  - Segó will attend and will report back.

- Tim reported that SPU's CPG funding currently pays for 2 FTEs and also \$400,000 of consulting each year.
- Some programs currently funded by CPG may be able to be funded in other ways.
- Any cuts that are required are more likely to be made in waste prevention programs rather than in composting programs.
- We hope to have a plan by September, but may have more information for SWAC by the August meeting.

#### **Debrief of Meeting with Councilmember Bagshaw, Heather Levy, SWAC Chair**

- Heather gave a brief update on the CAC officers' recent meeting with City Council Member Sally Bagshaw.
  - Each Committee's officers had fifteen minutes to give an overview of their Committee, as well as issues they are following and topics of interest.
  - Councilmember Bagshaw was very engaged, expressing interest in and gratitude for the Committees' work.
  - Topics discussed included:
    - Public awareness of the requirement that food waste be separated from garbage;
    - Committee support for an ordinance requiring use of only compostable packaging at quick-serve restaurants and reserving the use of green tinting for compostable bags only;
    - Support of the EPA's Record of Decision on the Duwamish Cleanup;
    - Support for continued use of Imazapyr to fight knotweed in the Cedar River Watershed.
    - Councilmember Bagshaw reported that she had just taken a group to lunch at Taco Time, because she heard they had switched to compostable packaging.
    - Councilmember Bagshaw suggested that SWAC could support compostable packaging (and companies that have switched to compostable packaging, such as Taco Time) and other environmentally beneficial initiatives by using social media.

#### **SWAC Business**

- Heather asked SWAC Members if they would like to have a meeting in July.
  - ✓ Members agreed not to meet in July.
- Sheryl, the Program Manager, will be setting up a Joint CAC Meeting sometime this year to review and discuss the Equity Analysis of the City's Comprehensive Plan.
  - ✓ Sheryl will also be sending outreach opportunity dates to SWAC.
- One Member reported that the new South Lake Union Farmer's Market is starting this Saturday.
  - Sheryl noted that SPU does outreach at numerous farmer's markets.
- Another Member noted that the Georgetown Carnival is also this Saturday.

- ✓ Heidi will email SWAC the Presenter Feedback Forms for the June meeting, since we ran out of time.
- ✓ SWAC Members should fill them out for Vicky and Marcia, and send them by email to Heidi.

Meeting adjourned, 7:38pm.