



SPU Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC)

April 4, 2018 Meeting Notes
 Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue
 Room 4901
 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
Chair: Holly Griffith
Vice-Chair: Quinn Apuzzo
Secretary: Adam Maurer

Committee Members	Present?	SPU Staff	Role
Quinn Apuzzo	Y	Susan Fife-Ferris	Division Director, SPU Solid Waste Planning and Program Management
Holly Griffith	Y	Natasha Walker	CAC Program Coordinator
Emily Newcomer	Y	Hans VanDusen	Solid Waste Contracts Manager
Colin Groark	N	Dave Hare	Planning Strategic Advisor, Solid Waste Planning and Program Management
James Subocz	Y	Ken Snipes	Chief Administrative Officer and Director of Solid Waste
Alan Garvey	N	Sally Hulsman	Solid Waste Inspection & Compliance Division
Amelia Fujikawa	Y	Guests	Affiliation
Adam Maurer	Y	Alessandra Pistoia	Guest
Rachtha Dahn	Y	Christian Hoogerheyde	Guest
		Dirk Wassink	Guest, Second Use

ACTION ITEMS:

- SWAC Chair will distribute the 2017 SWAC letter to members to begin considering topics / points of discussion for the May SWAC meeting.
- See list of potential community involvement opportunities in April in the “Around the Table” section of the notes.

1. Regular Business

SWAC Chair, Holly Griffith called the meeting to order at 5:33 PM

- Members and guests introduced themselves.
- Meeting notes from March were reviewed and approved.
- Susan indicated emergency exits and bathrooms.

2. National Sword Overview – Part II

SPU Solid Waste Contracts Manager, Hans VanDusen, continued the conversation from the March SWAC meeting regarding the “National Sword,” China's customs inspection program, subsequent scrap ban and associated geographic-specific impacts of the ban. Hans began with an overview of the SPU Processing Contract, followed by an overview of the adjustments made by SPU processors to address shifting market requirements. Hans touched on:

- SPU’s Financial response
- SPU’s Customer Outreach
- Market Development Support

The following questions were given to Committee members to consider:

1. What next steps do you recommend SPU pursue related to recycling market challenges for mixed plastic and mixed paper?
 2. Should SPU reconsider the mix of materials in the blue bin? If so, what items should we reconsider?
 3. Should SPU consider more producer responsibility for items currently found in the blue bin? If so, what items should we focus on.
- **Guest:** Is the reason SPU declined the request [to move items to the landfill] because Republic was able to find other markets? Was there any protest from Republic?
 - **Staff response:** It was our assessment that there were available markets; we didn't feel it warranted moving to landfill. They had a lot of material to move, and they were concerned but they did not protest the decision.
 - **CAC Member:** Does the price somehow factor into the decision?
 - **Staff response:** Because SPU shoulders the risk of the market, no.
 - **CAC Member:** Where's the furthest it's been shipped?
 - **Staff response:** South Pacific.
 - **CAC Member:** Who pays for disposal?
 - **Staff response:** Under our arrangement, we do. We know we generate contamination and we pay for it.
 - **CAC Member:** *(Regarding the Payments and Credits slide)* Would it make more sense to flip the chart. It seems disingenuous to show the "net total payment" as positive.
 - **Staff:** That makes sense to me.
 - **CAC Member:** Are there any SPU programs tied to the recycling revenue?
 - **Staff response:** No, the revenue goes into the Solid Waste Fund. There is no direct connection to certain programs.
 - **CAC Member:** Is the media getting it right when they're reporting on this topic?
 - **Staff response:** The little I have interacted with the press, I think they have handled it well. The reporter for the Seattle Times dived into the details and gathered multiple perspectives.
 - **Susan:** I would say they are overemphasizing the landfilling of recyclables aspect, and not emphasizing reducing contamination or reducing waste to begin with enough.
 - **CAC Member:** I saw an article a couple days ago about the aluminum being taxed?
 - **Staff response:** That's usually about virgin products. Not sure how scraps will be involved.
 - **CAC Member:** How big is the optical sorter, and how are they working?
 - **Staff response:** They are as big as the tables in 4901, and they have only been in for a few weeks. We will need to give it some time to see how they work out.
 - **CAC Member:** If there were items to be taken off the [recycling] list, what avenues/process would SPU do for outreach?
 - **Staff response:** If we did take items off the recycling list, we would probably need to do a full fledged, every-avenue marketing campaign and offer alternatives. But we don't want to go there; it takes so long to get people to do it right it's hard to backtrack on that.
 - **A CAC Member shared** that they thought we might see a change in the kind of packaging for beverages; namely less plastic and more aluminum.

The Committee broke into small groups for 10 minutes to discuss the provided questions, and then returned to a large group to report out:

- **Group 1:** Main conversation was about grocery store and how to pass along responsibility to producers via grocery stores. Spoke to the UK example where protestors left behind plastic / packaging at the grocery store. Also spoke about responsibility of producers to label recycling better so that folks know how to recycle. Secondly, spoke about what items should be going into the recycling bin. We discussed which items are providing the most contamination issues. Should figure out messaging around those items. Our question: What exactly is contamination? Is it a dirty mayonnaise jar? Is it garbage into the recycling bin? Regarding Question 1: We don't understand the market because its constantly changing. A year from now it won't be what it is today. What does SPU think that market be a year from now?
 - **Staff response:** Regarding contamination: we get it all. Straight up garbage, food contamination packaging, and non-recyclable materials. As for the market, we really don't know what we're sitting on even now, as this market crash is only four weeks old.
- **Group 2:** For question 1, we talked about honing our education/outreach and elevating it. We spoke about the importance of making sure the local recycling market continues to make money. We also spoke about proactive transparency – felt there was an opportunity to get in front of recent press on the China Ban; that it was a missed opportunity to explain what's happening and how SPU is responding. I think we lost some people's faith, especially those new to the area. There should be more of an effort to get in front of PR scandals in the future.
 - **CAC member:** To that point, the recycling industry as a whole dropped the ball. From Waste Management's perspective, we were all waiting with baited breath about the implications. This kind of ban has come up before in the past, and it didn't have as serious implications as it did now.
 - **Staff response:** If we were going to allow disposal of recyclables, we would have gotten ahead of the press.
 - **Susan Fife-Ferris:** I agree that we could be more proactive. I also think the industry thought it would have rebounded.
 - **Sally Hulsman:** I think the way you could deal with it would be to say, "this is coming up, and we have to step our act up."
 - **CAC member:** It doesn't matter what the article says; people read the headlines. The damage is done.
- **Group 3:** We talked about revisiting the packaging ordinance, so that it's all compostable and not a mix of recyclable and compostable because that falls under "marginal plastics". Food contamination is enemy #1 or #2. We also discussed poly-coated paper of coffee cups and the challenges with that. Regarding question 1, we want to focus on the markets where we're supporting / pushing on local MRFS / PRFS. We support SPU partnering with King County, being a regional leader in the community, maintaining that role and guiding towards consistent messaging. For question 2, we wondered about the value of separating our fiber. We felt it was the golden goose of the recycling industry, and such a large part of the stream. We know source separation has not been our way and the logistical considerations are huge though. For question 3, we talked about the fact that removing items from the list is a big deal, from both the agency and public perspective. For the things we're considering taking off the list, we should target the manufacturers first. For example: needing to remove aluminum lid from yogurt containers. Maybe focus on getting those containers to be all plastic. Committee members discussed "wishful recycling," doing more harm than good. Members discussed the implications between

“When in doubt, throw it out” versus “When in doubt, we’ll sort it out.” A Committee member shared an idea to focus on core recyclables and ensure they are 100% recycled and remove items from the recycling list that are small and technically recyclable but most likely to add to contamination. Another Committee member commented that another option would be to move those products through producer responsibility.

Hans encouraged SWAC members to use these conversations as fodder for the SWAC letter in response to the 2017 Annual Recycling Report. He also noted that while the report numbers are not yet available to share, he said members could expect to see:

- An increase in transfer station use
- An impact to compost due to low grass growth in 2017
- Recycling rates decreasing for the first time

3. Annual Recycling Report

Susan Fife-Ferris provided a brief overview on the timeline for SWAC involvement in SPU’s Annual Recycling Report. She re-emphasized Hans’ message about SWAC members beginning to consider topics and highlights for their letter. She recommended that members use the 2017 letter as a foundation for their 2018 letter.

Susan discussed some of the potential changes to the report, including the move towards more of a marketing piece that would highlight where SPU Solid Waste Branch is going, including more graphical displays and less tables. Dave Hare and Susan explained that they hoped this report would tell a story about Seattle’s solid waste, and about the communities we reach and the outreach / programs we offer. It may also touch on the upcoming Solid Waste Comprehensive Plan Update. She then reviewed the schedule for the Annual Recycling Report and the dates relevant to SWAC [see attached timeline].

- **CAC Member:** Is there a privacy issue between setting up some kind file sharing platform for creating this letter?
 - **Natasha** explained past use of Google Docs for SWAC letter, and ongoing research / challenges with available Seattle IT technology for document sharing platforms. The existing Google Group, managed by SWAC members, will be shared with Adam for coordinating this years’ letter.
- **CAC Member:** I think it’s a great idea to ramp up the report and utilize as a marketing piece. Can we see a mock-up of annual recycling report, even if content and numbers are not finalized?
 - **Staff response:** We agree that it is a missed opportunity; Council requires it and so they’re looking at it. If we have this opportunity, we should take it to highlight what we’re doing and the struggles we’re running into.
 - **CAC Member:** And in a way they are compelled to read it.
- **SWAC Chair, Holly Griffith, shared next steps:**
 - Holly will send out the 2017 letter and give two weeks for members to noodle on.
 - May SWAC meeting: Will have discussion on what we want letter to look like
 - June SWAC meeting; Will have final draft and talk through

4. Solid Waste Comprehensive Plan Update

Dave Hare, Solid Waste Planning and Program Management, gave an overview of the Solid Waste Comprehensive Plan, reviewed the elements of the plan as it stands now, discussed the amendment process for the plan, and opened a dialogue about SWAC’s role going forward. A consultant has been

selected and will be signed soon. Once signed, they will be able to join for a future SWAC meeting. Potential new sections include:

- An updated Recycling Potential Assessment (RPA).
- Updated metrics to redefine recycling success. The idea is to expand off the Symposium discussion, as well as address the lifecycle of a product.
- Resiliency in the face of natural disasters, economic changes, in the face of market changes and local population changes. Address the fact that we are a local recycle program being a part of a global trade.
- Environmental Justice and Service Equity component. Use of and partnership with SPU's new Community Partnerships program to disseminate this information, both in terms of translation/transcreation but also in outreach delivery. Dave noted that they hope to host "Discovery Sessions" where the community could engage in discussions on how to navigate us to our solid waste goals.

Dave described SWAC's involvement timeline as follows:

- **June 2018:** Will return to SWAC with a framework for the amendment.
 - **July-October 2018:** Stakeholder input will be conducted; SWAC members will have involvement.
 - **December 2018:** First Draft presented to SWAC
 - **June 2019:** Final Draft incorporating comments will be presented to SWAC. From there, it will be approximately 6 months to move through City Council, then off to Washington State Department of Ecology.
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- **CAC Member:** When are you doing the roll-out (specifically of discovery sessions)?
 - **Staff response:** We are planning to hold them starting in July. We invite you to join in these sessions and encourage SWAC involvement in formulating that plan.
 - **CAC Member:** I am excited about this direction.
 - **CAC Member:** How long is this amendment good for?
 - **Staff response:** State law requires we review the Comp Plan every 5 years. Our current Comp Plan was last written in 2011 and approved in 2013, so that's why we are reviewing and Amending the Comp Plan, starting in 2018. The Comp Plan is a 20-year plan but the Amendment we are working on would cover 2020-2026. We will start our next 5 year review in 2025.
 - **CAC Member:** You said there is going to be a life cycle assessment (LCA) for some products?
 - **Staff response:** Not every product, but the LCA that we use is a model that could be applied to individual products for consumer groups or manufacturers. It will provide a mathematical equation that could be applied. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a model to look at the lifecycle assessment, but our recycling potential assessment talks about greenhouse gases, all the way through lifecycle. When we start sharing that information with manufacturers or even consumer groups to download and make decisions based on, it's a great opportunity.
 - **Susan Fife-Ferries:** The City of Seattle has been using a recycling potential assessment for 20 years, but we want to highlight some of those sections that make it more real to people.
 - **CAC Member:** So, if the addendum is basically a revision to the current plan, is it going to be apparent what the changes are and is there value to highlight those changes?
 - **Staff response:** No one is going to read the tracked changes between the two. But maybe we could include an appendix or table that highlights substantive sections that were updated.

- **CAC Member:** I think that would be good; providing a quick and dirty. But also need to identify the priorities.

5. Around the Table & Community Insights

- **A CAC Member shared** about the 20th Annual Chinatown International District Spring Clean, April 28, 9AM-12PM. Free t-shirts, breakfast and lunch is provided. Recology and Waste Management have started the neighborhood recycling events and have partnered with this event. Free parking is available, if discussed in advance.
- **A staff member shared a few announcements:**
 - **April 17,18, 19: 9AM-6PM. Earth day tabling at the Grocery Outlet at Bitter Lake.** If SWAC members want to help with that, SPU's Pat Kaufman is the contact.
 - **On April 10, the City Council committee** is going to receive a presentation on the Solid Waste Collection Contract. SWAC members can tune in to watch.
 - **April and May: SPU spring Cleaning** is taking place. SPU's Daniel Sims is the contact.
 - April 15, 2-4:30PM. Zero Waste Home event: Bea Johnson presenting at the Riveter on Capitol Hill.
 - **April 21: Compost giveaway event** at South Seattle College, in partnership with Seattle Tilth.
 - **April 18: Seattle Central Earth Day event.**
 - **SPU has multiple Solid Waste internships advertised and open.** The details were emailed to Committee members.

Adjourned 7:32PM