



# SPU Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC)

March 4, 2026, Meeting Summary 5:30-7:30pm

Chair: Melanie Coerver

Vice-Chair: Lisa Watkins

Secretary: Travis Close

Committee Members	Present	SPU Staff & Guests	Role
<b>Melanie Coerver</b>	Y	Fatima Krubally	SPU—Administrative Staff Analyst
<b>Lisa Watkins</b>	Y	McKenna Morrigan	SPU—Strategic Advisor, Waste Prevention and Solid Waste Policy
<b>Travis Close</b>	N	Andrew Lee	SPU—General Manager and CEO
<b>Joe Camero</b>	Y	Jeff Fowler	SPU—Deputy Director of Solid Waste
<b>Marcus Johnson</b>	Y	Pam Johnson	SPU—Hazardous Waste Liaison & Policy Advisor
<b>Paige Madden</b>	Y	Katie Swanson	SPU—Solid and Hazardous Waste Lead Planner
<b>Karia Wong</b>	Y	Katie Stickels	Guest—WA State Ecology
<b>Phil Churilla</b>	Y	-	-
<b>Caitlin Singer</b>	N	-	-
<b>Mike VanReken</b>	N	-	-
<b>Erin Gagon</b>	N	-	-
<b>Chelsey Evans</b>	N	-	-
<b>Jacob Melaragno</b>	Y	-	-
<b>Tareq Fayyad</b>	N	-	-
<b>Alissa Campbell</b>	Y	-	-

## 1. Welcome SWAC & Introductions

Andrew Lee, the General Manager and CEO of Seattle Public Utilities, introduced himself and provided an overview of his background. He emphasized that Seattle is a national leader in waste management, recycling, and sustainability. Lee expressed pride in the city's progressive programs, particularly in composting and recycling access. He acknowledged recent leadership changes, including shifts in the

mayor's office and internal roles, but highlighted that there has been overall continuity in the city's priorities.

Andrew then discussed the Strategic Business Plan, which Seattle Public Utilities updates every three years. The next plan, for the 2026 cycle, will inform new programs, investments, and staffing. It will also outline a six-year rate path for utility pricing covering the period from 2028 to 2033. Historically, rate increases of about 4.7% annually have been consistent with the city's commitments. He also addressed state-level issues, focusing on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) particularly related to packaging and recycling systems. Progress in this area has been slow, but it is deemed essential.

One example mentioned was the paint recycling bill (HB 2301), which is currently in limbo and referred to as a “zombie bill.” On the national front, there is ongoing advocacy for funding water infrastructure and federal investment programs. At the local level, the mayor is concentrating on two main issues: affordability and environmental sustainability. However, there is a notable tension between these priorities, as concerns arise about the potential rollback of environmental progress due to cost considerations.

SWAC then introduced themselves, stating their name, affiliation, interest, and how long they have been SWAC members.

## **2. Policy and Legislative Updates Presented by Jeff Fowler**

Jeff and SPU staff shared updates on ongoing work shaped by the recent mayoral transition and the time-intensive 2027–2028 budget process, while also advancing several operational and strategic initiatives. A Phase 1 study has begun to explore the long-term potential sale or redevelopment of the Midway Landfill, driven by increasing developer interest, though this remains a multi-year effort.

Regulatory compliance has improved significantly, particularly with stormwater permits at transfer stations, where most sites are now compliant and overall cleanliness and operations have noticeably improved.

On the policy side, the current legislative session is largely a “foundation-building year,” with most bills stalled, though the paint producer responsibility bill (HB 2301) may still pass and could eventually reduce hazardous waste costs.

SPU also highlighted a \$4M EPA-funded salvage lumber warehouse project and shared early insights from a waste composition study showing strong recycling performance, with capture rates around 72–75% despite declining tonnage due to lighter materials. A major focus is improving food waste diversion in multi-family housing, where participation remains low; to address this, SPU is piloting “Mill” devices that dry and grind food waste, testing both individual and shared use across 200 units. These efforts aim to reduce barriers like inconvenience, odors, and pests, which continue to challenge multi-family waste systems, and future discussions will focus on pilot results and refined strategies to increase participation and diversion.

### **3. Spring Recruitment Presented by Lisa Watkins**

The SWAC Chair inquired with the SWAC members regarding their approval of the notes from the previous month. The notes received unanimous approval with no revisions necessary.

The SWAC Vice-Chair shared details about spring recruitment, which opens in April and runs through May, with selected applicants approved in July to start in August. The plan is to recruit three new members: two from solid waste or waste-related businesses in Seattle and one representing a community-based or marginalized group. The focus is on candidates who bring relevant expertise and community engagement, while maintaining appropriate boundaries between their professional roles and this representation. Team members are encouraged to help with outreach, share information, and participate in reviewing applications and interviews, making the process both engaging and informative. Past experiences show the importance of selecting candidates who are not only qualified but enthusiastic and invested in the work, fostering meaningful dialogue and community involvement.

### **4. Goodwill Tour Debrief**

The SWAC Chair shared insights from a Goodwill field trip to the Job Training and Education Center, highlighting their operations, challenges, and opportunities. The organization handles 118 million pounds of donations annually across 21 stores, with 41% sold in retail and the rest either sold in bulk, sent to outlets, or ultimately landfilled, raising concerns about textile waste. Goodwill is exploring improvements, including expanding e-commerce, using AI for pricing efficiency, opening new facilities, adding coffee stands and Amazon drop-offs, and updating donation rules. Despite these efforts, they’ve lost money for the past three years

and rely on savings to sustain programs like staff training and ESL classes. Participants were encouraged to contribute ideas via a shared Google Sheet to capture observations, potential partnerships, or solutions, particularly around recycling, textiles, and financial sustainability, while learning from the field trip about the complexity and scale of Goodwill’s operations.

## 5. SWAC Comments

SWAC discussed upcoming events, announcements, and opportunities for engagement. A recycling collection event (“Beyond the Cart”) took place on March 21 at South Park/Seattle College, similar to past events and useful for dropping off items like electronics and batteries. There are also upcoming meetings and public engagement opportunities, including the Recycling Reform Act Advisory Council meeting and training on public meetings. Additionally, a summer recycling internship program is recruiting about 11–12 interns focused on outreach and education. The group highlighted the importance of staying informed, participating in community efforts, and sharing feedback. Other local activities include the Cherry Blossom Festival with new nighttime events aimed at supporting local businesses. There was also discussion about proper disposal of small scrap metal and recycling practices.

March 21 – Beyond the Cart recycling event (South Park / Seattle College)

April 18 – Next mentioned recycling-related event (details not specified)

Upcoming – Recycling Reform Act Advisory Council public meeting (second meeting)

Upcoming – Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) training

Summer (Recruiting now) – Recycling Corps Internship Program (11–12 interns)

March 13–29 (approx.) – Cherry Blossom Festival (including new nighttime “Night Blossom” event)regular text. regular text. regular text. regular text. regular text.  
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## 6. Public Comments

Guest shared details about upcoming reuse and repair-focused events happening in March 2026. These include workshops and presentations at the Market Development Center, featuring repair, education, and innovation programs. A recent initiative, the Washington Streetwide Impact Calculator for reuse, will also be presented. Participants can register online and attend the discussions they are interested in.



Thursday, March 18 – Friday, March 20, 2026 – Market Development Center events:  
repair, reuse, and educational workshops  
March 19, 2026 – Online presentations on the Washington Streetwide Impact  
Calculator for reuse and grant programs

**7. Meeting Adjourned at 7:25 PM**