



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

August 1, 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	Sheryl Shapiro	CAC Program Manager
Holly Griffith	Y	Natasha Walker	CAC Program Coordinator
Emily Newcomer		Ben Whitley	Solid Waste Operations, Division Director
Colin Groark	N	Pat Kaufman	Commercial Recycling & Composting Program Manager
James Subocz	Y	Daniel Sims	Senior Program Manager, Community Partnerships Team
Alan Garvey	N	Veronica Fincher	Waste Prevention Program Manager
Amelia Fujikawa	P	Roslyn	SPU Intern
Adam Maurer	Y	Lauren	SPU Intern
Rachtha Dahn	Y		
Alessandra Pistoia	Y	<b>Guests</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Dirk Wassink	Y	Lindsey Engh	Guest

**1. Regular Business**

SWAC Chair, Holly Griffith called the meeting to order at 5:39 PM

- Members and guests introduced themselves.
- Meeting notes from June were reviewed and approved.
- Sheryl indicated emergency exits and exit procedures.

**2. Solid Waste LOB Updates**

Solid Waste Operations Division Director Ben Whitley provided Solid Waste line of business updates.

- **Bag Update and Recycling Rate Report** were submitted to Council. No formal comments have been submitted, but SPU has received comments from Councilmember Herbold. More information will be provided at the next SWAC meeting.
- **Solid Waste Comprehensive Plan:** Solid Waste staff have met with consultant team and kicked off project. More information will be provided at the next SWAC meeting.
- **Straw and Utensil Ban** went into effect July 1, 2018. A comprehensive update will be provided later in this meeting.
- **Construction and Demolition Waste:** A Request for Proposal (RFP) will hopefully be posted later in August; Hans VanDusen will be the lead on this.
- **North Transfer Station:** has high visitation and SPU has received positive feedback on the educational materials on walls and the (literal and figurative) window into the mechanics of the operation.
  - A CAC member shared that they had visited the North Transfer Station and outreach center as part of a field trip. They asked if SPU tracks the number of community members using the facility. Staff responded that we are not, and that are also struggling

to track the people using the recycling center. They added that tracking is going to be an important planning component for the new South Transfer Station, and they hope to apply those tactics to adjust tracking at the North Transfer Station someday. They said SPU would also like to get a better read on the use of the Re-Use area at the North Transfer Station.

- **SPU has a new organics contract with Cedar Grove**, which will involve hauling the material to Everett. This will likely mean higher impacts from traffic and higher labor costs, as well as some interesting system challenges especially as viaduct is demolished.

### **3. Setting up future RSJ Meeting**

Sheryl Shapiro described the presentation provided at the July CDWAC meeting, focused on the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative. Sheryl explained that we would be sharing the same prep materials with SWAC members, and follow-up at a future SWAC meeting with a discussion.

Shapiro walked members verbally through the King County Equity Maps, which were explored at the July CDWAC meeting, and gave some historical context on the exploration of this topic at a past All-CAC Meeting which was the catalyst for this meeting. CAC members were told to stay tuned for links to explore and prepare for the September discussion.

### **4. Straws and Utensil Ban Update**

Commercial Recycling & Composting Program Manager Pat Kaufman gave an update on the straws and utensil ban that went into effect on July 1, 2018. Pat began with a review of SPU's Commercial Program, including a timeline of commercial policies/regulations before specifically diving into food packaging requirements, bag requirements, the ban of food and recycling in garbage, and the most recent utensil ban. Kaufman distributed materials, including:

- A direct mail piece that will go out in the next week or so, which will go to food service businesses only. The piece encourages keeping plastic straws on hand for medical exemptions.
- A letter that introduces the requirements, which went out in March to businesses.
- A standard food packaging flyer sticker. SPU offers the stickers to food service businesses. These are also available to SWAC members.

Kaufman discussed exemptions, such as:

- Foil-faced paper wraps, the performance of which has not been matched by compostable alternatives.
- Long spoons, because only limited vendors offer compostable alternatives.
- Single-portion cups, because the performance of the product has not yet been matched in all cup sizes by compostable vendors.
- Medical or physical disabilities, where a plastic straw is needed. He noted, however, that the law does not contain language requiring businesses to keep plastic straws on hand.

Kaufman explained that the new plastic utensil ban requires that straws be compostable, but it does not dictate whether businesses should provide compostable straws only upon request. This practice is encouraged, he explained, because it reduces one-time use waste. SPU has learned a lot from this process, and Kaufman said the Utility is talking with sister cities to share lessons learned.

- A CAC Member asked if we ever run into compostable sporks. Staff explained that the compostable packaging market needs to have an adequate market to develop items, which may not necessarily exist for items like sporks.

- A CAC Member said they would like to see stickers on compostable products that are compliant with the law, specifically at grocery supply stores and Costco. Staff responded that SPU offers magnets to places like Cash N Carry and Restaurant Depot, but that it can be challenging as their displays change frequently. He noted that SPU recommends working with the supplier to determine the best way to advertise, and that Restaurant Depot was using a color coordination scheme to identify compostable materials. He agreed that providing tools to communicate with customers is helpful.
- A CAC member inquired about the timeline for revisiting exemptions. Staff responded that the exemptions must be reviewed, and the law amended every year, as part of the Director’s Rule.
- A CAC member said that despite the ban going into effect on July 1, they still see non-compliance with utensils. In addition, they said it might be harder to check the material of straws, since the compostable labeling is less clear on straws than on utensils. They asked if SPU expects to see more contamination with straws than utensils. Staff responded that the language on packaging can be very confusing for consumers, such as indicating an item is “made from plant material,” which does not necessarily mean compostable. They explained that while the law went into effect July 1, businesses can use up the supplies they have. Upon inspection, if they are found to be non-compliant because they are still using up existing supplies, the inspectors will note that. Kaufman explained that SPU wants to help businesses become compliant and learn from the process, rather than immediately resort to infractions.
- A CAC member asked if SPU had any concerns about the sanitation of unwrapped utensils. Staff responded that there are manufacturers who make compostable utensils in compostable wrap. There are also manufacturers who make compostable ware dispensers.
- A CAC member asked if a web-based application exists for reporting non-compliance, much like the Find It Fix It mobile application. Staff said that’s an interesting thought and something worth discussing in the future. SPU has included the Green Business contact number in our Curb Waste Times for reporting concerns.
- A guest asked if Cedar Grove has been a part of the process in deciding what materials can be processed. Staff responded that Lenz Composting and Cedar Grove have their own testing process. They maintain lists, and we tell restaurants to check out those manufacturer-approved packaging. SPU also works with supplier to see if they can source those items. Staff explained that one of SPU’s goals is to get that information on one website, but currently there are two contractors who lists we recognize.

## **5. Community Grant Program Updates and Process Overview**

Waste Prevention Program Manager Veronica Fincher returned to give an update on the Waste-Free Communities Matching Grant Program. Veronica revisited the parameters of the grant program, focusing on project requirements and SWAC and Community Liaison feedback that helped shape the grant process. Those included:

- Consensus among SWAC and the Community Liaisons on the name of the grant program;
- Further clarity and adjustments on the grant amounts;
- The term “prevention” resonated with community liaisons, but “re-use” did not;
- Expanding from two to three grant information sessions to include the Central Area;
- Clarification to starting time for grant awardees to accommodate school-year.

Daniel Sims from the Community Partnerships Team joined to walk through the methods and venues for promoting the grant program, including new social media tactics.

Fincher and Sims shared several lessons learned, and proposed changes for the 2019 grant cycle. These included asking questions about how applicants learned about the grant, using clarity from this round to encourage more video applicants, and exploring geographic gaps in applications (including where the applications come from and where projects have impact).

They did not receive grants submitted in language, and no requests were made for translation at outreach events. Fincher noted that they will continue to do community workshops but will also explore other ways to engage with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in the future. SPU's solid waste immigrant and refugee contract was not in place at that time, but the team plans to utilize the contract in future grant cycles.

Fincher and Sims shared some learnings from the project selection process and reflected on possible adjustments to the criteria in future cycles. Staff said that if they continue to promote this grant yearly, they expect to see additional organizations beginning to think more about waste prevention. They hope to keep the grant consistent and present in the community.

- Staff asked if there were any applications for K-12. There were not. Staff explained that it revealed an opportunity to do more outreach in that sector next year.
- A CAC Member asked about the “match” category. Staff explained that a 50% match was required. This is something SPU plans to think through again next year, including the potential option to submit a match exemption. Staff also noted that a match does not necessarily mean funding; it could also be volunteer time, etc.
- A CAC Member asked if there were projects that were similar to each other, in terms of the site. Staff responded yes, some were very similar. One of the lessons learned from this cycle included needing to provide more clarity on what SPU is expecting in terms of community partnerships, to help applicants be more successful in their bids.
  - As a follow-up, a CAC member inquired about timeline constraints. They explained that some applicants may have an idea for a partnership, but the timeline could hinder the development of that partnership. Staff responded that the intention was to launch in December, and though that didn't happen we aim to have that timeline in the future.
  - A CAC member asked if there was any talk about SPU facilitating connections to community partners. Staff said they would need to figure out how to go about that. An email address and phone number were provided for applicant questions and when applicants asked, SPU staff could offer advice. However, they would like to explore how to offer that advice consistently and equitably.
- A CAC Member inquired about the feedback process for rejected applicants. Staff said they emailed all applicants and offered to provide feedback, but are not able to do so until the contracts are signed.
- A CAC Member asked if grant winners can apply again in next year's cycle. Staff responded that yes, they can, but not as a continuation of the current project.
- A CAC Member asked if staff see this program expanding. Staff said that if the projects are successful and we see waste prevention results, then it is possible. They also hope to see the interest in this grant grow over the years to come.
- A CAC Member asked if measurement is an element of the grant process. Staff explained that some projects have easy ways to measure, while some will be more output-based like the number of people reached. Most projects, Fincher explained, have some kind of evaluation process. SPU will receive a quarterly and final report as part of the grant award requirements.

Staff and members explored what projects showed innovation and where gaps existed in terms of applicants and audiences impacted. **There will be an opportunity for SWAC members to participate in some of these projects.**

#### **6. Around the Table & Community Insights**

- A CAC Member shared that they had won an award from the corporate office of QFC (Cincinnati headquarters, each division selects one person). The store has rallied around getting recycling done correctly and reducing solid waste pickups. The recognition was in this member's efforts to push this forward, and the prize was a donation to a nonprofit to Zero Waste Washington. QFC is now looking to roll these strategies out across other QFCs, and he will keep us updated as they implement.
- A CAC Member shared about the Tour of Strategic Materials and Ardagh Group in July, put on by the Washington State Recycling Association. The event looked at how glass gets recycled. The member said it was eye opening to see the process, and that they were surprised by the amount of non-glass materials present.
- August 7 is National Night Out. Neighborhoods participating are posted on the Seattle Police Department website. There are also print-outs available for putting on garbage recycling/compost bins, which was spearheaded by SPU's Becca Fong.
- CAC Vice Chair, Quinn Apuzzo, will be on maternity leave for the next couple months.
- A reminder that the next SWAC meeting is two days after Labor Day.

**Adjourned 7:31PM**