



SPU Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC)

November 2, 2022 Meeting Notes
Webex
5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

Chair: Brie Kuhn

Committee Members	Present?	SPU Staff /Guest	Role
Danny Barksdale	Y	Quinn Apuzzo	SPU – SWAC Program Coordinator
Rina Fa’amoe-Cross	N	Liz Fikejs	SPU – Sr. Waste Prevention Program Manager
Brie Kuhn	Y	Rich Gacer	SPU – Sr. Management Systems Analyst
Alessandra Pistoia	N	Bob Hennessey	SPU – Senior Policy Advisor
Hannah Scholes	Y	Sally Hulsman	SPU – Inspection & Compliance Manager
Adrian Tan	Y	Pat Kaufman	SPU – Commercial Recycling & Compost Manager
Ming-Ming Tung Edelman	Y	Katie Lynd	SPU – Community Affairs
Michael Johnson	Y	Sylvia Cavazos	SPU – Community Partnerships Manager
Chelsey Evans	Y	Diana Wadley	Guest – Department of Ecology
John Martin	Y	Heather Trim	Guest – Zero Waste Washington
Erin Gagnon	Y	Katie Swanson	Guest
Wendy Weiker	Y	Holly Yanai	Guest - Divert
Steven Walls	Y		
Yongkang (YK) Zhou	Y		

1. Welcome & Introductions

- SWAC Chair, Brie, called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.
- Members and guests introduced themselves. Prompted by the SWAC Chair, they each shared their name, affiliation, and favorite holiday meal.
- October meeting minutes were approved by SWAC members in attendance.

2. Comments on Solid Waste Line of Business (SWLOB) Updates for SWAC

Chair Brie reminded the committee that the line of business updates will continue to be provided in writing in advance of the meeting and asked members to review and come prepared with questions. Katie Lynd provided an overview of the November SWLOB Updates, including:

- To encourage participation in food & yard waste collection service a direct mailing was sent to approximately 4000 customers whose food & yard waste carts had not been set out for collection in over 4 weeks.
- [Deconstruction Rebate Pilot Program \(DRPP\)](#) is a new incentive program that offers up to \$4,000 per residential deconstruction project in support of the salvage and reuse of deconstructed materials.
- On October 20th, National Reuse Day, SPU hosted a media event to promote [Reuse Seattle](#) (a public-private partnership between SPU and reusable service ware providers) to highlight the launch of r:cup at Showbox locations.

- SPU is preparing to launch the next cycle of the [Waste-Free Communities Matching Grant](#) in January. This fall, SPU is updating the grant program guidelines and documents and preparing a communications plan.
- SPU is conducting a survey of single-family residents to understand customer satisfaction with recycle, compost, and garbage services at their homes and identify barriers to composting and recycling.
 - The survey will be deployed October 21-November 30th and is being conducted in partnership with local WMBE consultant, PRR.
 - The survey, available at <https://bit.ly/SPUGarbageRecyclingSurvey>, will be promoted on customer bills, emailed to customers, and hosted on the SPU Customer Portal page.
 - The survey will be offered in 8 languages: Amharic, English, Traditional Chinese, Korean, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. Responses will be monitored weekly to determine if they reflect a statistical significance of the racial, geographic, and income make-up of single-family residents in Seattle.
- Upon the retirement of Hans Van Dusen, long-time Contracts Manager for the LOB, SPU hired two staff to serve consecutive 5-month terms as interim Contracts & Diversion Manager. Angela Wallis, 5-year solid waste Contracts Coordinator & Development Review lead, will serve in the role from November 16 through April 2023. The permanent job will be posted nationally this winter.
- Staff are finalizing the *2022 Solid Waste Plan Update: Moving Upstream to Zero Waste*. It is expected to be adopted by City Council in Q1 2023.
- SPU has established a project team to evaluate weight-based solid waste metrics proposed in the *2022 Plan Update*. The team is assessing weight-based metrics that help us measure progress toward circular economy and zero waste goals, such as waste generation, waste disposal, and capture rates.
- In conjunction with the [Northwest Product Stewardship Council](#), SPU is preparing an outreach campaign about Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) to educate the public and legislators about this policy approach before the upcoming legislative session.
- Preparing scope of work and budget for a waste composition study of the self-haul sector in 2023.
- The Transfer Stations were closed the afternoon of 10/19 through 10/20 due to smoke and an Air Quality Index of over 200.
- **A SWAC member asked**, Is there information available on participation in the rCup pilot at the Showbox?
- **A SPU Staff member responded**, We don't have data from Showbox but ReuseSeattle, a public private partnership in which SPU is involved, published a [report of rCup's launch at the Woodland Park Zoo's ZooTunes Summer Concert Series](#). The report includes an overview of the pilot including data on recovery rates, reach, waste prevention, and more.
- **A SWAC member asked**, Regarding the mailing that was sent to customers who weren't putting their Food & Yard Waste carts out: How does this account for people who may be on vacation?
- **A SPU Staff member responded**, This subset of customers were setting out their garbage carts but not their food & yard waste carts. This was verified by SPU's inspection team and route drivers. Also, the time period for assessing food & yard waste cart usage was intentional and selected to avoid peak summer vacation or winter holidays.

- **A SPU Staff member shared,** A reminder to sign up for [Alert Seattle](#), the City of Seattle’s official emergency alert system, as well as SPU’s [Recycle It App](#), for convenient information about recycling, compost, and garbage services.

3. 2023 Officer Elections

Chair Brie and Quinn shared information about the 2023 SWAC Officer Elections. SWAC Officer elections will occur in November with the goal of announcing the 2023 Officers at the December meeting. Officer positions include: Chair, Co-Chair, and Secretary. SWAC members are encouraged to nominate their peers and/or self-nominate. More details on the Officer roles, responsibilities, and election timing will be shared in the post-meeting recap email and interested members are encouraged to reach out to Quinn or Brie with questions.

4. Food Rescue Bin Pilot Update

Senior Waste Prevention Manager Liz Fikejs provided an update on the Food Rescue Bin Pilot.

- In Seattle, food is banned from the garbage yet food still makes up 25% of what Seattle businesses are putting in the garbage.
- Food waste should be going in the compost, but safe, edible food should be going to people.
- Significant amounts of food picked up by hunger relief organizations are not edible. These non-profits bear the cost of managing and disposing of this food waste.
- When this happens, food ends up where it doesn’t belong: into the garbage or recycling.
- In Washington, local government has legislative authority over solid waste but not food rescue.
- In this pilot program, SPU is using solid waste industry knowledge and expertise to show organizations involved in food donation and hunger relief, opportunities for improving food donation systems and reducing waste by putting food in the right place.
- In addition, SPU has found that working on food rescue can lead to *preventing* surplus food in the first place.
- SPU’s role in food rescue has been:
 - Convene stakeholders to understand the root causes of why food is wasted in the food donation process.
 - Collaborate in research, on-the-ground assessments, and pilots at grocery stores and food banks.
- SPU used assessments at 8 grocery stores conducted in 2021 to inform the 2022 Bin Pilot project. The pilot tested tactics and strategies to determine if the quality and quantity of donated food could be improved *and* waste reduced.
- The pilot focused on using a standardized bin, donation guidance, increased communication with the food rescue nonprofits, and prototyping a bin reuse service.
- Pilot participants included three Safeway stores, three hunger relief organizations, and HumanEco, a consultant who provided the bin reuse service.

- Safeway was a valuable partner and is taking ownership of this issue. In doing this work, SPU was able to show Safeway how they could improve their donations and prevent food from going to garbage – both at stores and at food banks.
 - Safeway is now talking with their food recovery partners to understand what they don't want or don't have capacity to take. One solution to unwanted food (such as bakery items) might be to produce less of it.
 - These food rescue BMPs developed for the pilot are widely applicable.
 - SPU still has more to learn about the role that bin reuse systems could or should play in this process.
 - Next steps include sharing findings internally and externally, continue learning, leverage partnerships, and identify incentives for wider adoption.
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- **A SWAC member asked,** Do we know why certain retailers have more food waste than others?
 - **A SPU Staff member responded,** We know from national food waste prevention work that grocery stores don't collect enough granular data to be able to answer this. With Safeway, they used their [waste collection] bills to identify stores for the pilot. We also knew that one of the stores had suspended their food rescue donation program and we saw that as a opportunity to avoid waste by helping them restart the program. The pilot took place over 4 weeks and during that time we found that the quality and quantity of donated food increased, and both food banks and Safeway stores observed operational efficiencies and waste decreased.
 - More information on the Food Rescue Bin Pilot can be found here: [Food Rescue Innovation - Utilities | seattle.gov](https://www.seattle.gov/utilities/food-rescue-innovation)
 - **A SWAC member asked,** Is the expectation that Safeway employees would now fill the yellow bins, and how much does it cost to clean the bins?
 - **A SPU Staff member responded,** The expectation during the pilot was that store employees would be trained to sort and fill the yellow collection bins. Food banks don't have the capacity to wash donation bins. The idea behind this element of the pilot was to demonstrate to stores that it could benefit them to take responsibility for this process because it would be cost-effective and result in increased donations and reduced waste expense. Unfortunately, we didn't have enough time to fully pilot this aspect of the program. This is something we're hoping to work on in the future.
 - **A SWAC member commented,** I see a lot of parallels with the recycling system. The better we do upstream, the better we do downstream. How do we make it as easy as possible for consumers? This is really important work, especially as the state works to implement HB 1799. I think it's great that SPU is working to help develop data driven best practices and engage grocery store partners in this work.
 - **A SWAC member asked,** I think it's great that SPU is taking a data driven approach to supporting food recovery efforts. I'm curious about the incentives that grocery stores would need to invest in this kind of process improvement. I know grocery store margins are tight

and imagine that there is a cost to train and implement this type of system. Is there a way we can help incent them to adopt these BMPs?

- **A SPU member responded,** We will be looking into this more next year. SPU doesn't oversee food rescue, like we do with solid waste, but this question is really important to figuring out what role SPU should play in this process and ultimately, how to prevent food waste from going to the landfill.
- **A SWAC member asked,** What will the transition or hand-off of this body of work look like?
- **A SPU member responded,** We don't yet know. California has similar legislation [to Washington's HB 1799] and it has taken them years to get to the stage where the system and infrastructure are set up to capture more food scraps for compost and implement edible food waste donation requirements for top generators. We know that we need both incentive and enforcement tools at state and local levels to meet our goals. SPU is engaging with our counterparts in California to better understand which policy tools would be appropriate while working on the ground with local grocers to better understand the challenges and opportunities.
- **A SWAC member asked,** Is the idea that the grocery stores will be responsible for doing the data collection [of donated food]? I imagine they need to do this for tax purposes.
- **A SPU member responded,** Historically, food banks have attempted to capture donation data but these efforts have largely been undertaken by volunteers and not well resourced. Albertson's, Safeway's parent company, is going to start training employees to scan out donated food. This method won't capture all food (i.e., items without a bar code) but it represents progress toward capturing more granular data on food donations. According to grocers that we spoke with, they max out their food donation tax deduction within the first quarter of every year.
- **A Guest asked,** Did SPU pay for the standardized donation bins? And if so, how much did they cost?
- **A SPU member responded,** The yellow bins used in the pilot were borrowed from food banks. Instead of purchasing these bins, we allocated funding to prototype a reuse service with consultant, HumanEco.
- **A Guest asked,** I noticed in one of the photos that some food was packaged, and some was not. Could you clarify which bin was going to go to compost and which was to be donated?
- **A SPU member responded,** Safeway contracts with a company called Divert, that takes both packaged and unpackaged food waste, removes the packaging, and processes the organic waste via an anaerobic digestion system. The problem is that when the Divert bins overflow, store staff put the overflow into the garbage. The Divert bin photo also showed donatable packaged food on top. Without proper signage and employee training, Divert bins have become a "catch all" container for any surplus food – whether it should be composted/biodigested or donated. This can result in reduced donations.

5. Solid Waste Inspection and Compliance Presentation

Solid Waste Inspection and Compliance Manager Sally Hulsman and Senior Management Systems Analyst Rich Gacer provided an overview of SPU's inspection and compliance program.

- The overarching goal of the compliance and inspection team is consistent and accurate collection service and billing.
- Seattle's recent growth, development, and density presents many challenges for customers and contracted waste collectors (WM and Recology). The team works to support all stakeholders and ensure service equity.
- In addition, the team works closely with Seattle Department of Transportation, Department of Construction & Inspections, Business Improvement Associations, and SPU outreach staff and program managers.
- The team has 10 lead inspectors. Each inspector is assigned to a specific area of the city. This allows inspectors to develop local knowledge and relationships that help them be responsive and proactive in addressing emerging issues.
- Inspector's scope of work includes: helping new and existing properties set up collection systems and on-going support, optimizing on-site food waste collection, working with haulers and developers to identify safe, accessible waste storage and collection points, disposal ban monitoring and enforcement activities.
- Inspector site visits and field activity is driven by customer requests, contractor requests, site audits, or routine field inspections.
- Inspectors help support waste reduction and diversion programs and goals. Inspectors ensure containers are properly signed, labeled, and located, share educational resources with property managers, and make recommendations to help make it easier for customers to participate in collection programs and divert recyclable and compostable material from the garbage.
- New construction townhomes, backyard cottages (i.e., DADUs, ADUs) are a growing and important part of Seattle's housing inventory but present new challenges to how waste collection service has traditionally been provided. For example, SPU worked with a developer who added 6 townhome units where there had previously been one single-family home. The inspection team has to determine how to safely service the site and accurately bill for the services provided. The team works to find creative solutions to help minimize cart congestion and, in some cases, have been able to offer shared services or other tailored solutions.
- Business Improvement Districts (BIAs) are another focus area for the inspection team. These tend to be located in dense areas with mixed use buildings, restaurants, public venues, and homeless encampments. Inspectors visit the districts a couple times a week to look for and respond to illegal dumping, overflowing dumpsters, and other non-complaint or unsafe waste situations. Inspectors work closely with customers, SPU outreach staff, and other partners to resolve compliance issues and safety concerns by educating customers, providing technical assistance and other support. Progressive enforcement tactics are only employed after a significant amount of outreach has been conducted without resolution.
- Data and billing accuracy is an important part of the inspection team's scope of work. [Note: SPU's solid waste collection rates are based on the amount that a customer throws away. [This is known as a pay-as-you throw or variable rate pricing, and creates a direct economic incentive to recycle more and generate less waste.] The inspection team conducts site visits

- to verify on-site collection equipment (carts, dumpsters, compactors, etc.), verify that contractors are accurately charging customers when extra bags of garbage are set out for collection, and ensure service providers are meeting contract required performance standards.
- The inspection team receives between 30-50 field requests to verify service levels and equipment every day. SPU tracks inbound field activity requests including factors such as seasonal variability, inspector route efficiency, equity (based on geography, housing type), and other factors to optimize inspector workflows and maintain a high level of responsiveness.
 - The inspection team utilizes a mobile application to track workflows. Granular data is collected on customer behavior (i.e., cart utilization, contamination, extras, etc.) which can then be segmented and mapped to help SPU improve service, inform outreach efforts, and increase operational efficiencies.
 - The inspection team is involved in a number of special projects that were informed by data insights and community input, for example:
 - **Nihonmachi Alley Project Pilot.** In response to community feedback and concerns about illegal dumping in the Chinatown International District (C-ID), the soon to be completed Nihonmachi Alley art pilot employs culturally-responsive imagery to demarcate areas where Clear Alley Program (CAP) customers should place and store waste prior to collection. The pilot supports the community's activation of the public alleyway which features public art and gardens honoring the history and legacy of Japantown's residents and businesses.
 - **35th Ave S. Townhome Cart Congestion Pilot.** To address concerns about large quantities of carts stored in the public right-of-way at new townhome developments, SPU has increased engagement with developers to proactively plan for on-site waste storage areas and shared services. To address cart congestion at existing developments, SPU is piloting a new initiative, in conjunction with Seattle Department of Transportation, where designated parking spots will be restricted for carts. The pilot is informed by community feedback and seeks to increase public safety, improve curb appeal, and support collection service reliability and efficiency.
 - **Citywide Waste Access Signage Update.** SPU is supporting a proposal that new waste staging or access ramp areas include supplemental signage designed to increase public awareness and compliance with solid waste rules and regulations.
 - **Proposed Changes to the Clear Alley Program Director's Rule.** In this update to the Clear Alley Program Director's Rule, which prohibits that carts and containers from being stored in the public right of way in parts of Seattle's downtown core, would add safety requirements for moving containers to the curb, no parking restrictions for containers in curb spaces, add cardboard-only dumpsters to CAP container exception sites, clarify language around the times containers are allowed to be set out in the public right-of-way, and add a requirement that containers in the right-of-way be lidded, locked, and the area be kept clean.

- **Locking Requirements.** In response to feedback gathered from the 2021 survey of SPU's commercial customers, the inspection team is helping inform a proposal that would implement locking requirements on some commercial carts and containers. The goal of the proposal is to decrease instances of illegal dumping, arson, and missed collections.
- **A SWAC member asked,** How do you work with your partners? I work for a hauler and am curious about how SPU approaches collaboration as well as enforcement with contracted service providers?
- **A SPU member responded,** With Recology and WM, our two contracted haulers, we have standing monthly coordination meetings but are also in daily contact via phone, email, and in-person meetings. For example, today we worked together on an issue with a private alley that the collection trucks couldn't safely access or collect due to parked cars. Our team met with the contractor's staff on site to evaluate the situation and then reached out to 85 impacted customers to ask them to place their containers in a new location for service. Our team has to be responsive to emergent issues and work collaboratively to find proactive solutions.
- **A SWAC member commented,** I love that collaboration mindset rather than trying to assign blame.
- **A SPU member responded,** With many more people working from home due to covid, there are more cars than ever parked along residential streets which has caused big challenges for collection drivers. It's not the driver's fault or the customer's fault. Our team is focused on finding solutions. As the city grows, our approach must adapt and evolve. Using data to help us visualize what's happening in the field has helped us become more proactive problem solvers.

6. Around the Table

- [2022 Refugee Artisan Initiative Virtual Thank You Event](#) will be held on November 9th from 6-7pm.
- [Nextcycle Washington's Renew Seed Grant applications](#) are due November 16, 2022.
- Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) [Evergreen Chapter's Winterfest 2022](#) social event and scholarship fundraiser will be on December 15, 2022 from 4:30-8:30pm.
- Chair Brie reminded SWAC members to respond to the post-meeting survey and officer nomination form and thanked everyone for their time and participation.

Adjourned 7:32.