

## Somerville Climate Forward

### Consumption and Waste Working Group

September 7, 2017

#### Attendees

- Victoria Gasidlo
- Laura Olivier
- Mike Orr
- Matt Gray
- Melissa Lowitz
- Renee Scott
- Lauren de la Parra
- Sharon Bort
- Hannah Payne, city staff

#### Vision

- Do we need to include “climate change impact”?
- Bring in the three R’s: reduce, reuse, recycle
- Do we have a definition for consumption and waste?
- Shift framing to positive action.
- Set goal or metric (will come at later stage)
- We all have to consume but the question is how do you do it more thoughtfully?
- It’s all about *responsible* consumption and waste diversion.
- Trash reduction should be a goal.
- Paying more attention to waste can be a feedback mechanism for thinking about consumption and may lead to behavior change.

#### Idea Brainstorm

##### Mitigation

- Curbside composting pick up or drop off location for household food scraps.
- Look at “pay as you throw” policies to help pay for composting and encourage waste diversion.
  - Could also explore hybrid pay as you throw option where each household gets a certain amount of trash that can be picked up each week and additional trash costs extra.

- September 1<sup>st</sup> move in generates a lot of trash—much of which can be reused. Could DPW implement a program similar to Christmas tree pickup for certain items that could be recycled or donated the week before and after Sept. 1?
- Mattress recycling program (grant funding available from DEP)
- Host a community yard sale at the end of August. Many colleges in the area do this (Harvard has a big one).
- A lot of residents use Next Door to find used items or to sell/ give away used items.
- Schools are big waste producers and there is little recycling in the schools. Consistent recycling requires commitment by janitors. What are some of the easier things that can be done to minimize waste? For example, make sure that kitchens are recycling big plastic food containers or switching from plastic to cardboard wherever possible.
- Require recycling in all government buildings.
- Require compostable containers at festivals and city-run events.
- Have vegetarian options at all city-run events.
- Purchase split trash can/ recycling bin to make it easier for janitors to collect both trash and recycling.
- Use real silverware at school cafeterias. Not all cafeterias have dishwashers.
- Key is getting plastics out of waste stream.
  - Ban plastic water bottles
  - Install recycling containers next to every public trash can in the city.
  - Add more public water bottle filling stations like the one in Davis.
- How many people use Waste Wizard? This is a great tool for outreach and education about waste, especially for people who sign up to get the street sweeping reminders.
- What are the opportunities to reuse/ recycle construction materials from the coming new development?
  - Create a construction waste policy
- Put a reuse center in Somerville for building materials and kitchen appliances. (e.g. Reuse Center at Boston Building Resources)
- Develop a waste audit like the home energy audit. Someone could come look at how your gutters are draining, install a rain barrel, teach you how to do backyard composting. The challenge with the composting bins that DPW sells is that people don't know how to use them properly. If people had help setting them up they may be more inclined to use them.
  - This could be a volunteer program.
- Improve education about existing polystyrene and plastic bag ban.
  - More policing of the bans.
  - Update the plastic bag ordinance to require a charge per bag.
- Ban plastic water bottles and straws.
- Encourage people to get things fixed instead of buying new.
  - What incentives could there be for this?
    - Parts and crafts
    - Host fix it clinics

- More advertisements about opportunities / fixer fairs

### Adaptation

- Indoor greenhouses to grow food.
- Incentivize convenient stores to offer fresh produce and partner with community gardens.
  - Mass Food Trust has programs to encourage small businesses to have produce in food deserts.
  - Would need to develop a better distribution network to make it possible. Logistics of distributing fresh produce in small quantities are challenging.
- Are there any gleaning programs in Somerville?
  - Food for Free operates in Somerville
  - Elizabeth Peabody House and Somerville Homeless Coalition will pick up food.
  - There is no Somerville based food rescue operation. Could encourage some group like that to operate in Somerville or provide grant funding to do more.
- Local food is great but sometimes it can have a larger carbon footprint because shipping food in container ships is very efficient. Might create more emissions by driving a small truck with smaller loads.
  - Local food production and distribution could be key during an emergency.
- Create community task force to clean drains.
- Host more clean-up events throughout the city to pick up trash.
- Somerville Climate Action has depaving parties. What about doing something similar for waste related clean ups? Could the city support a depaving program?

### Equity

- Provide more translations for recycling information.
- How do you engage with larger businesses that have a lot of waste? Seems like much of the burden of complying with bans falls on small businesses while larger businesses find easier ways to get around it without adhering to the mission (i.e. using thicker plastic bags).
  - We don't have a real estimate of commercial waste. Are there opportunities to engage with businesses? Could give them a PR opportunity.
  - How do we hold big businesses accountable for the waste that they produce?
- Not all large apartment buildings provide recycling pickup. This is an equity issue.
  - Can we bring them into Somerville's waste pickup system? Even if we charge them?
- When starting a small business, it's hard to get everything sorted out. Can the city provide recycling and trash pickup?
- Reduce fees for composting bins or rain barrels. Further discount them for income qualified residents.
  - Undocumented immigrants might be apprehensive about interacting with the city.

- Some residents don't have transportation to get to DPW to get rain barrels/composters or to drop off electronic or hazardous waste.
- Set up compost drop off in certain locations and provide pick up through Metro Pedal.
- Cost for disposal will only increase for trash. There is only one landfill left in the state, which will likely result in more municipalities wanting to send waste to the Saugus waste to energy facility. It's not sustainable to rely only on the waste to energy facility, should focus on reducing trash.
  - Implement composting.
- Add climate change to curriculum that talks about waste and everything covered in this plan.
- Increase access to bulk items – encourage more bulk options in smaller stores to help reduce packaging waste.
- Can city provide bags to people? Ban produce bags too?
- Can we have a location in DPW or other city building to leave things that can be fixed or reused? (Take it or leave it area for residents)
- Issue with banning more things: it's such a small amount of the waste stream. Focus instead on bigger contributors like food waste.
- Have the city be a bulk purchaser of other things to help reduce waste and provide discounts to residents.
  - Bulk purchase cora balls, which collect microfibers from washing machine.
- Create other versions of tiny libraries. Could we use a similar model to share other things?
- Put more boxes around for people to put cigarettes in.

#### **Additional Ideas Shared After the Meeting**

- Data about diversion/participation rates in the city's recycling program could be displayed more prominently and encourage more accountability on all sides. Some cities do this at a district/neighborhood level on a monthly basis.
- What can be done to improve recycling habits among people that are participating? Multiple cities have been experimenting with cart tagging programs to educate residents about recycling contamination, often in partnership with the local recycling company.
- What tools/financial assistance can Somerville use to improve its existing programs? For example The Recycling Partnership (a national nonprofit) offers customizable resources for reducing contamination, educating residents on social media, etc.
- Update mandatory recycling ordinance language to bring more apartment building into compliance.
- Some cities have been revisiting the idea of in-sink disposals as a solution for food scraps instead of or in addition to curbside collection. Philadelphia now requires they be included in new residential construction. LA recently launched a pilot program in one neighborhood to see how diversion rates will change when every apartment has access to a new in-sink unit.