

Somerville Climate Forward Consumption and Waste Working Group Meeting #2 November 16, 2017

Attendees

- Melissa Lowitz
- Mike Orr
- Matt Gray
- Victoria Gasidlo
- Laura Olivier
- Cole Rosgren
- Renee Scott
- Vithal Deshpande, City of Somerville
- Hannah Payne, City of Somerville

Solutions the group is most interested in seeing implemented:

- Food waste diversion/ curbside compost
- Recycling enforcement
- Expanding recycling

Individual feedback on specific solutions

Melissa

- Recycling enforcement and education to reduce contamination and non-compliance.
- Example from Providence.
- Get youth volunteers to go around door to door offering advice and encouraging people to recycle. Create and distribute recycling dos and don'ts pledge card.
- Tag recycling bins and reward households that recycle more. Track recycling rates by ward and have competition between wards. Focus education on wards with lower rates.
- Look at addressing main contaminants in recycling.

Mike

- Waste Wizard is a great tool. Can it be utilized to help people get information about recycling?
- 65 gallon trash can is big. Limit the size to reduce amount of trash allowed.

Matt

- Expand city garbage and recycling service to larger apartment complexes and businesses. Many businesses don't comply because they have to find their own service and it is difficult when starting a business.
- Need to actually hit the goals of having mandatory recycling.

Victoria

- Expanding recycling service
- Challenge: it's too easy to throw things away (including recycling)
- Contamination could be a challenge if increasing volume of recycling
- Is there any issue with having more recycling from expanding the service? (i.e. cost)
- Need support from city and DPW and schools.
- Need to engage property management companies. Residents should be able to report their management if they do not provide recycling.

Cole

- DEP has Recycling IQ kit online to assist with education and outreach.
- Business enforcement – DEP has a cardboard ban in the state, but it is difficult to enforce.
- Better enforcement of the mandatory recycling ordinance.
- Make recycling easier—make sure you can recycle the same things at home and at work.

Laura

- Food waste diversion—focus on public drop off options and food rescue in schools.
- If curbside compost pickup is cost prohibitive, can we increase businesses that are drop off locations?
- Private compost pickup service is too expensive for one person.
- Schools – composting is difficult for schools (onsite composting has problems) and they don't have the budget to get it hauled away. Could start with food rescue programs instead. Look to other school districts that have figured this out (Lawrence and Andover).
- Question: does the City have the authority to enforce the organics waste ban?

Renee

- Composting – Should have more worm composting education. Easy to do and can do it in your basement. Need a place to drop it off that can use the compost. Growing Center could take it.
- Recycling bins need to be next to all public trashcans – this is written into the proposed zoning overhaul.
- Big Belly – could get bins for free by selling advertising on side of bins.
- Improving recycling in schools is key. It all comes down to being enforced and working with the custodians to implement.

Vithal

- City received \$30,000 DEP grant for school recycling for 2018.
- Somerville has ticketing enforcement process for curbside recycling and trash – sanitation inspectors follow trash routes and issue tickets or warnings, but they also have other responsibilities.

- Waste wizard – people love it and use it. Want to make it multi-lingual.
- City offers free recycling to everybody – but businesses have to pay for recycling cart.
- Public bins – recycling bins often get contaminated with trash and then it all has to get thrown in trash.
- Cost of organics pickup is very high and cost-prohibitive for the City.
- PAYT – city has looked into it but sees a challenge with transient population.

Discussion on Consumption

- Solutions are more focused on the waste management than on reducing consumption and waste generation.
- Emphasize meal planning to reduce food waste.
- Consumption based inventory could be useful tool.
- Buying something new is often cheaper than getting something repaired. What incentives are there for repairing/reusing? Library repair cafes / fix it clinics
- Buy local and work with Main Street orgs to promote local businesses.
- Citywide yard sale (like porch fest).
- Cambridge used to have deal with MA Coalition for the Homeless –people would fill out list online with what they were getting rid of and then Coalition for the Homeless would come and pick up items.
- Curbside day for furniture– two days before trash pick-up around Sept 1. Would allow for people a day or two to pick up items before they are sent to the trash.
- Consumption encompasses more than what this group has been talking about – need to address energy and water consumption (and overuse).

Discussion on Zero Waste

- Zero waste is an aspirational goal. It's a marketing tool to make people feel inspired.
- If setting zero waste goal, need to clearly define it. How do you track it? By weight or by reduction?
- Tracking reduction is better than weight.
- Recycling is still waste—people don't know the whole story of it. Just increasing recycling is not sustainable.
- What is Somerville's diversion rate right now?
- Challenge: data limitations – tonnage data includes all waste that city picks up (city buildings, schools, residential, etc.)
- Transparency in the goal is preferred.
- Zero waste is confusing. Net zero goal might be confused with zero waste goal (and vision zero).
- Political goal is hard to enforce – most aren't laws.
- LA has financial penalties if they don't meet certain goals.

- Set specific recycling and trash goals instead of setting zero waste – because no one knows what it means.
- Instead of having target of zero waste can we have a 3-10 year target to increase waste diversion goal?
 - Set achievable goal of increasing recycling and diverting other waste (hazardous waste included)
 - Cambridge – set trash reduction goals, which is nice because you only have to track one number.

Additional Comments

- Don't want a plan that is just advocacy, needs to be actionable.
- Competition between wards would be good incentive to encourage waste diversion.
- Education plays a big role – if you have a service people need to know how to use it.
- What is the community's involvement after the plan comes out? – Exploring ways to continue working group involvement in implementation after the plan is released.