

MAB Meeting Minutes  
March 20, 2024  
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**MRF Advisory Board Members present:** Arlene Miller (chair), Ethan Tupelo (minutes), Jan Ameen, Tracy DeMaio, Linda Cernik, Steve Ellis, Mary Stucklen, Amy Donovan, Laurie Simmons

**Other attendees:** Ruby Chang

Meeting called to order at 10:04

**Public comments** – none

**Approval of previous minutes**

Amy Donovan: Margarita Cruzado's last name was missing from the minutes.

[Some discussion about if it was strange to have in the minutes or not.]

Arlene Miller asks if there are any objections to adding it in? None.

Jan Ameen: moves to accept the 1/17/24 minutes with the above amendment, seconded by Laurie Simmons. Motion passed unanimously.

**MRF update**

No one from Waste Management present at meeting. Arlene Miller reports that Mike sent a one sentence update, that all operations were running well, and material is moving.

Steve Ellis: Mike has been able to catch up with the Jan and Feb tonnage. Tours are the same, no big demand in winter. Cleanup and maintenance days are often on Friday.

Jan Ameen: Wanted to point out that the current AMV is stupendous. Went up another \$5, currently almost \$73 in value against the tip fee.

Linda Cernik: Can I share this information with towns to educate them?

Arlene Miller: Yes, it's a public document, already sent to all MRF towns.

**Treasurer's Report**

Jan Ameen: Only a few small expenses at the moment from our graphic designer and social media, otherwise quiet at the moment. We will soon have the bills for RRR guides, around \$4-5000 together. We currently have around \$27,000 in funds, most dual stream money.

Arlene Miller: We've previously decided to pay for RRR out of dual stream funds. RRR South got a 15% discount this year.

Amy Donovan: RRR North is going to be about \$1162.

Jan Ameen: Moves to approve paying for costs of RRR North and South, not to exceed \$4000 total. Laurie Simmons seconds. Motion approved unanimously.

## **Contract extension**

Jan Ameen: We made a presentation at the last MAB meeting. With Steve Ellis' help, we went back to Waste Management, asked for edits. We're waiting now for what should be the final draft. I reached out to my solid waste district legal council to read it, will review the language on behalf of all communities. We're in a holding pattern until we get something from Bernie.

Arlene Miller: Many of the smaller towns would potentially need to go to town meeting to approve a new contract. However, five years ago most towns approved an extension of 10 years. If that's the case, the town wouldn't need to go to town meeting again, and could just sign an additional five year contract. We need to remind people to figure out what their status is, so they can sign within the next six months, and not have to go through a complicated process. This doesn't apply to cities, who can just have their City Council approve contracts at any time. We sent out a letter to all MRF communities and got many responses, but most seemed ok, or are looking into the language of the last decision. Many were asking to see original contract and compare. We need help moving it through your communities, being able to discuss how we are sharing the AMV. Sometimes it's hard to figure out who to send such a letter to, Susan Waite helped with many of the contacts.

Arlene will share the letter with the MAB.

Mary Stucklen: Do we know points of contact for towns?

Arlene Miller: We don't have a list, we know what towns we represent, but we often need to seek out with specific towns.

Jan Ameen: Could Arlene send out spreadsheet we're using as a starting place?

Mary Stucklen: Even knowing there is old information or a gap is better than nothing.

Amy Donovan: Received a message from Connecticut towns if they could join MRF? We need to look into it, but I can't see why not.

Amy Donovan: Linda said that Casella in Vermont or New York is no longer offering services? We should look into what Pittsfield is doing.

Linda Cernik: All northern Berkshire recyclables are transferred to Cheshire branch, then Twin Bridges outside Albany NY. We were offered a tour to see the facility. We currently do dual stream, but not sure if their facility is single or dual. The main problem for us using the Springfield MRF is the hauling costs, \$650 from Dalton to Springfield. Current hauling contract is until 2025.

Mary Stucklen: The Pittsfield incinerator has been shut down and mostly demolished. Casella is using as a staging area, potentially turning it into a transfer station? Not sure why they would be buying that if they were planning on leaving Pittsfield.

Jan Ameen: We can't do much with these towns until the new contract is public, then we can publicize, and try to get people to sign on.

Amy Donovan: I also wanted to let people know that Greenfield voted to leave the MRF, going single stream within three years, will likely not sign contract.

## **MRF Vacancy**

Arlene Miller: We had an application from Ruby, which I shared with the group.

Ruby Chang: I'm usually in the Berkshires, but I'm in Phoenix right now! I have questions about mission of advisory board, goals, duties. I've been on the Health Board of Great Barrington for a while, now in third term, on other boards as well. Trying to get Great Barrington on board with composting and recycling offerings, Susan Waite has been main go to person.

Arlene Miller: 15 on the board, represent 66-67 communities that have a contract with the MRF, interface between MassDEP which owns the MRF, and communities that sign the contract. Mostly involved in public education, involved with dynamics of the MRF and tours. Each board member takes on a handful of towns near to us that we live or work in.

Amy Donovan: The mission statement is on our homepage.

Jan Ameen: I just emailed Ruby the bylaws

Arlene: Waste Management gives us \$10,000 a year based on the contract. We also have the authority to assess a public education fee to towns, but we haven't done that in a few years. The money rolls over if we don't use it in one year. Public education is the major goal.

Mary Stucklen: I can meet with Ruby at some point as Berkshire representative, also to bring her in for RRR West.

Arlene Miller: We generally meet monthly, and skip some months. Some subcommittees meet outside of meetings.

Ruby Chang: I'm especially interested in educating the younger generation. As a pediatrician, I know the impact children have on their parent's behavior. I've been trying to bring in composting to local schools.

Jan Ameen: Moves to accept Ruby Chang as a Berkshire representative, and we'll work out which specific towns. Laurie seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

### **RRR North**

Amy Donovan: We've been chugging along, getting there. I wanted to make us aware that we got a full page ad for USA, both for North and South. The ad says for 50 years we've been working to recycle, now have a state of the art facility. Of particular interest: they say customers can now recycle items such as black plastics with them, and they can accept many things that others consider trash. We say in What Do I Do With that with black plastic is a no.

Arlene Miller: We can't control that, they are single stream, and others may take it. They do want our business, that a reality of our lives.

Tracy DeMaio: Casella will be the same in the future, we'll eventually need to address this, similar to how RecycleSmart references Western Mass, where they say 'check with your local programs.' USA says it's no longer a contaminant, but we're not promoting it at the moment, thinking about confusion in neighboring towns.

Amy Donovan: RecycleSmart says no black plastic statewide. We should adjust the language in WDIDW on this point.

Tracy DeMaio: Interested to see how many inquiries we get about this, if people are reading the guide closely enough to notice and ask. I think that would be great!

Amy Donovan: After resisting for many years, I had a black plastic article in the last issue of Going Green.

Amy Donovan: Last year we did overruns of RRR North, and distributed to member communities. 3000 overruns for \$1500. [Crosstalk about if we've authorized enough for overruns with previous decision.] Moves to pay for RRR North overruns at \$1500. Mary Stucklen seconds. Motion approved unanimously.

### **RRR South**

Arlene Miller: El Pueblo version is an insert, not translated. Featuring articles about batteries because of recent fires and explosions. Something with plastics if we have room. Maybe will have something from MassDEP. Conversations with staff are very productive.

## **Projects for 2024**

Amy Donovan: When transfer station attendees toured the MRF, Steve showed the videos before the tours. One of the attendants asked why shouldn't this be made into 30 second commercial? Just wanted to pass that on. Also, my parents had an idea about taking out ad in the billboard in front of the MRF.

Amy Donovan: We used to do kids coloring book, from the MRF operator 20 years ago.

Mary Stucklen: We could create a make your own recycling coloring page, that kind of thing is more engaging for kids.

We could also create actual subplans for teachers, incorporate videos, coloring page, etc, something that the teacher can use. CET has lesson plans, but we could create things specifically around the MRF.

## **MAC Update**

Arlene Miller: Susan sent around her newsletter: grant training program, open office hours. She wanted me to mention the person working with Spanish translation with RRR South, if anyone wants to work with her more.

**Next meeting:** Apr 17. Arlene will be out of country, Laurie can run meeting as vice chair. Arlene will send a picture from Spain.

Arlene Miller complements the many people involved on the state level with MassRecycle. Stay tuned for messages from contract subcommittee.

Linda Cernik: Thomas Erwin has been doing great job with paint care bill, hope it passes.

Meeting adjourned 11:19