

Springfield MRF Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

June 16, 2024 (Virtual Meeting via Zoom)

MRF Advisory Board Members present: Arlene Miller (chair), Ethan Tupelo (minutes), Tracy DeMaio, Ruby Chang, Jan Ameen, Susan Waite, Amy Donovan
Joining late: Steve Ellis, Mary Stucklen

Other attendees: Mike Moores (Waste Management), Bernie Fosu (Waste Management)
[Meeting called to order at 10:07 by Jan Ameen. Arlene Miller is on the call but has connection problems for the first 15 minutes. We were one short on quorum at the start, so this was an informational meeting until quorum was achieved at item 5 below.]

1) Public Comment Period

None

2) Review and approval of previous meeting minutes

Amy Donovan thought they were great. No concerns from anyone. No vote taken due to lack of quorum. [Minutes will be approved towards the end of the meeting.]

3) MRF Update: markets, tours (Mike and Steve)

Mike Moores: Things are holding pretty steady. We had 1413 tons for May. AMV is pretty consistent, \$80.03 for May, now \$80.17 for June. Not a big change in the market, sorted residential paper went up about five bucks, aluminum a little, but most pretty steady. No real issues with operations, a lot of up time. Hot weather is coming up, we're making sure the crew takes extra breaks, extra fluids are available for them. We have fans in sorting room, but they're working hard, we want to make sure everyone is taken care of.

Bernie Fosu: Team has been doing a great job. I want to highlight a couple months ago we did a 'boots on the ground' exercise, where the leadership team goes to one site to chat with people, do an audit of operations, and checking if there are issues of exclusion that makes people not feel like they belong. We didn't find anything of concern at this facility, which speaks to Mike and the team's dedication to making everyone feel involved. We've noted that the volume is lower, and this seems to be an industry wide thing, but better from where we started this year, and happy to be wrong if it goes up. Appreciate the support we got with Margarita, Mike and the team planted the tree a few weeks ago, her memory is with us.

Susan Waite: You mentioned the market trend of less volume, less local than national. I wonder if it's a residual effect from negative recycling press pre-pandemic, the misunderstanding about a low amount of plastic being recycled.

Bernie Fosu: It's a combination of factors. Biggest is that market hasn't recovered from Covid level of expenditures. For example, people are not at home generating OCC from packages from Amazon as much. There's also competition in the area, lots of other companies are expanding capacities in the region, so volume has contracted while capacity has expanded. We're fortunate in the western

Mass area, people are understanding of recycling, a lot due to the work of this team, but that's not the case in all regions. For example, we're dealing with an issue in Syracuse with people getting the incorrect message that they could put sharps in the glass streams, and then we couldn't even use that for alternative cover for landfills. We don't have those issues in this area.

Amy Donovan: Have the plastic blocks still been showing up?

Mike Moores: We haven't seen those since last call, although we have been looking at the few towns we narrowed it down to. Either word got out that those shouldn't be in there, or something else happened.

[Mike Moores and Bernie Fosu leave. Mary Stucklen joins.]

4) Treasurer's Report: (Jan)

Jan Ameen: I sent out the budget. We're still expecting small invoice for social media, but otherwise it's complete for the fiscal year. We're ending the year with \$22K in the bank. \$14K is dual stream money. We didn't do any special projects this year, mostly spent on regular ongoing outreach and the website this year.

[Steve Ellis joins. Arlene Miller has fixed her connection, and takes over chairing the meeting. Quorum has been achieved from this point on.]

5) MAB Budget FY 2024

Jan Ameen: I put together a placeholder budget. Carryover for all municipalities is what we had from before some towns moved to single stream contracts. I just added the \$28 of interest to that. We made the decision this year to pay everything out of what we call the dual stream money, the \$10K we get from Waste Management. They're quick with paying us, so we should expect that again in early July, and then have \$26K total in 'dual stream.' We're starting this fiscal year in the same place as last year, because we basically just spent the \$10K from WM this year, but not more.

Arlene Miller: Our primary focus of the board the remainder of this year is getting the new contract approved. Any comments or additions to the budget?

Susan Waite: Could we move money in special projects into something else later, like the website if we wanted?

Jan Ameen: I think we could vote to do anything like that to cover those costs.

Susan Waite: Once the contract is settled, there are some projects I'd like for us to consider, sounds like there's flexibility.

Susan Waite: The MAB made decision not to levy the educational fee on municipalities about five years ago. If we chose to demand it again, it will be difficult and unpopular. Do we need to talk about that or vote on it each year? It would be worth reminding municipalities that we haven't been levying that so that they are aware that we are doing them a service and it might not continue forever.

Ruby Chang: Why aren't we?

Arlene Miller: The new contract in 2020 had a large processing fee for the first time, and recycling became an overall cost for town. To mitigate that, we decided to stop that fee. We also had enough money in the coffers for what we wanted to do.

Jan: Also worth clarifying that Waste Management would just deduct this from the town's reimbursement amounts, towns didn't literally get an actual bill for this fee. There was once we billed single stream towns for the educational fee when they weren't sending things to the MRF, which is a really hard sell, and probably not something we would want to repeat.

Amy Donovan moves to accept budget as proposed, Susan Waite seconds. Passed unanimously.

6) Election of 2024 officers

Officers needed: chair, vice chair, treasurer, clerk/secretary, member at large for executive committee.

Susan Waite nominates Amy Donovan for chair. Amy respectfully declines, expresses possible interest in the future.

Arlene Miller nominates Jan Ameen as treasurer, Susan Waite seconds, passes unanimously.

Amy Donovan nominates Arlene Miller as chair, Susan Waite seconds, passes unanimously.

Arlene Miller nominates Tracy DeMaio as executive committee member at large, Susan Waite seconds, passes unanimously.

Elections for positions of vice chair, and secretary/clerk tabled until next meeting. We hope to check in with people not at the current meeting to make sure they are interested. There is currently a representation vacancy for the MAB in Franklin County for Greenfield. Ethan Tupelo has announced he is taking a new job at Boston College starting in August, so there will be an opening for Hampshire County for Northampton/Easthampton/Southampton/Hatfield. We should all think about who may be interested in these positions. If people are interested, the process is to send a letter of interest to Arlene as chair, then have a discussion with the board, then the board will vote.

7) FY 2024 goals – projects

Arlene Miller: The biggest goal for the rest of this year is getting the contract extension wrapped up.

8) MRF contract extension

Arlene Miller: Jan, Steve, and I have been meeting with WM. 98% of the text is the same as the current contract. Processing fee will go up 2.5+1 percent, with that plus 1 percent coming out of the AMV.

Jan Ameen: We've been picking away for months at little details. We thought we were good with minimum tonnage. The current contract said we had to guarantee 17K tons, or WM had ability to pull out. We were under, but they didn't. We were giving them 18K and 17K in FY 21 and 22, but

those were pandemic numbers. We're now under, and there's no way for WM to recoup that money. We've projected we'd end this fiscal year at 16K. But Greenfield went single stream, while Holyoke has come back in, but we just found out a few weeks ago that South Hadley has left. We're at a net loss of 1200 tons, looking at 15,300 total. That's an issue for WM, their processing fee is based on getting at least 17K. They can't process 15K tons at the same price they offered us last time.

Arlene Miller: We have a formula in the new contract that says if the tonnage goes below the target tonnage we would pay a bit more. That formula is not really meant to take into account a shortfall of this degree.

Susan Waite: One factor to keep in mind is that haulers are pushing for automated collection. That often works against dual stream (it costs less to operate collecting one stream vs two).

Ruby Chang: I think there are new hauler regulations towns need to adopt, and perhaps recommends dual stream?

Arlene Miller: The regulations require private haulers to offer recycling if they are hauling waste, but not that it has to be dual or single stream.

Amy Donovan: We have 66 dual stream in western mass, around 10 single stream.

Arlene Miller: The message we want to send to towns is we need as much tonnage as possible, like if they're sending their schools somewhere else, maybe they could send it to the MRF.

Amy Donovan: Should we consider writing to single stream towns, encouraging them to come back to dual?

Arlene Miller: Not sure if that's worth our energy, as much as solidifying those that are currently dual.

Jan Ameen: Casella is now going to charge \$650 per haul for Dalton, because they want them to bring their materials to them instead. Small towns are really being squeezed.

Susan Waite: Electronic presentations may not be the best, a more personal touch, like a roadshow, might be useful for that region.

Jan Ameen: We also need to remember this is mostly a price change for the extension, not a completely new contract like in 2020 when we had meetings in Northampton.

Susan: Recyclables are a commodity and there are other organizations capable of and interested in processing recycling for western Mass municipalities.

Amy: Has anything changed about the \$5 credit for glass?

Arlene: No.

Amy: Any changes for yes/no acceptable list?

Arlene: That will be by mutual agreement. That's not a contract issue. The board and WM can discuss that at any point.

Tracy DeMaio: I'm guessing that most single stream towns are ones that have curbside collection. It's going to be really difficult to convince them to switch to dual, since that saved a boatload of money in terms of collection, even with better recycling deal for the materials.

Amy Donovan: With lots of transfer station communities, many considered going back to dual stream in the last contract revision.

9) Future MAB meeting schedule

Arlene Miller: I think there's no reason to meet in July. The August meeting would be Aug 21.

Susan Waite: That's a long time to go without a meeting. Can we create a to do list for people to think about? Potential new board members. New municipalities to join the MRF.

Jan Ameen: I think the MAB would need to meet to vote on the new contract?

Steve Ellis: I would definitely endorse supporting the contract with a vote before we start sending it to towns.

Arlene Miller: We don't have a contract yet. Maybe we would just call an emergency special meeting whenever it's finished.

Jan Ameen: We can put in a July 17 meeting so it's on everyone's schedule, and just cancel it if we don't have the contract by then. We can keep the meeting focused on the contract itself.

10) MAC update

Susan Waite: Not a lot to report. 280 communities applied statewide, almost 80 in western mass! About 22 communities statewide applied for the swap shop drop off, and 17 for the universal waste shed, so it's going to be competitive.

Arlene Miller: I'd request you consider having an in-person municipal recycling coordinator meeting at your new space in western Mass in the fall.

Susan Waite: I'll talk to Susan Cooper and others; I just don't see others from the Berkshires coming with Zoom as an option.

11) Other Business

Ethan Tupelo: We didn't actually vote on the minutes of the last meeting at the start, because we didn't have quorum.

Susan Waite moves to accept the May meeting minutes, Jan Ameen seconds, approved unanimously.

12) Next meeting

July 17 at 10am, focusing primarily on the contract extension. If it's not ready by then, we will likely cancel, and meet Aug 21 at 10am.

[adjourned at 11:21AM]