

**Meeting Notes from Solid Waste Master Plan Workgroup on
Building Municipal Capacity/Regionalization
March 16, 2009
Worcester Public Library**

Meeting attendees: Jan Ameen, Franklin County SWMD; Karen Bouquillon, City of Northampton; Irene Congdon, DEP Municipal Assistance Coordinator (MAC); Lorna Cerbone, Town of Saugus; Tom Daley, City of Newton; Dan DiTullio, Waste Management; Tessa David, Mass Toss; Carolyn Dann, DEP MAC; Ann Dorfman; Marc Fournier, DEP; Sharon Kishida, DEP MAC; Michael Pattavina, City of West Springfield; Rod Robinson; Town of Concord; Julie Rose, City of Salem; Sandy Totter, Southern Berkshire SWMD; Meredith Lee, Toxics Action Center; Eric Weiss, Hilltown Resource Mgmt Cooperative; Sarah Weinstein, DEP; Jessica Wozniak, MassRecycle.

Meeting Facilitator: Brooke Nash

Brooke opened the meeting with a summary of the February 26th meeting where attendance was light, but many good ideas were discussed. The topics and goals for today's meeting were outlined as follows:

- Discuss specific sectors and waste streams: organics diversion, multi-family recycling, reuse strategies
- Fostering regional approaches (discussion began at 1st meeting, but more input is needed from representatives of regional solid waste/recycling groups).
- Discuss low or “no cost” strategies that will facilitate increased recycling/composting
- Discuss strategies requiring funds (should they become available through the Waste to Energy (WECs) program and/or an expanded bottle bill)
- Other subjects not discussed previously
- Time permitting: prioritize strategies and assign short and long term needs/objectives

Since there was limited overlap between the first and second meeting participants, Brooke also reviewed two potential funding sources: Waste to Energy Credits revenue for recycling programs approved by MassDEP, and proposed expansion of bottle bill (legislative initiative). Participants suggested that MassDEP also call for a disposal surcharge in the new SWMP, which would provide revenue and create a price signal on disposal being less preferable than recycling. Another participant pointed out that if funding is tied to the amount of waste disposed, funding reductions occur when more waste is recycled/diverted.

Organics Diversion:

The group was asked to discuss ways to increase diversion of food waste (organics) from the residential waste stream.

- Lack of compost facilities/capacity is major issue. Composting facilities are often not good neighbors. Farm-based composting works in parts of Western Mass but there's no “safety net”. If collection programs rely on one site and it closes, the collection program folds.

- MassDEP needs to foster development of regional organics facilities and fund their development. Brooke explained the potential for a state-issued RFP for an organics facility with a guaranteed organics stream, technical assistance on permitting, and long term contracts. Participants felt this was a good model to pursue, ideally with state-owned land, but even on private land.
- MassDEP needs to work with municipalities with existing municipal leaf/yard waste composting sites to expand those operations. A participant is seeking approval to handle residential leaves/yard waste at a site that historically takes just municipally-generated material from parks and public green spaces. Composting residential material would save the community hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, instead of trucking it to a distant composting facility.
- Municipalities need pilot funding to test residential curbside collection of organics. Brooke mentioned San Francisco, Seattle and Ontario as models. Marc Fournier described Prince Edward Island which provides substantial financial incentives for recycling/diversion and a large disincentive for disposal.
- Suggestion: look at Central Vermont SWMD's curbside organics collection program as another successful model.
- Brooke described a long term contract for organics management, utilized in San Francisco (20 years between City and its vendor) that enables a vendor to capitalize organics facility construction.
- Communities will need to transition into an organics collection program and contract at the end of their waste disposal and recycling contracts
- Discussion of rural vs. urban/suburban management of organics; food waste can be managed in backyard compost bins, but many people (even in rural areas) don't want to compost food waste in backyard. Seasonal barriers to backyard composting are also real (composting in the snow is not easy).
- Organics waste ban, initially for commercial organics, makes sense (with proper market signals) – reduces methane generation in landfills and supports composting facilities and collection route density.
- The economics of organics collection and management is tricky; tip fees can be high and revenue from sale of end-product is small.
- Schools should get more support for on-site composting, including training for teachers and school staff to create a closed loop programs – compost → gardens → food → back to compost. This has important educational value too.

The organics discussion led to requests for additional types of composting bins and containers on state contract. Brooke stated that MassDEP is getting ready to re-bid the current contract (FAC 31) and is taking suggestions on additional product categories. Contact is Brian LaValle (brian.lavalle@state.ma.us). The current contract provides recycling bins for curbside collection, multi-family and single stream collection (carts), public space bins, compost bins, rain barrels, solar trash cans/compactors, and office recycling bins.

Additional Needs for State Contracts:

- More public space/events containers (multiple vendors)
- Biodegradable bags for food waste collection containers at schools (and homes)

- Corrugated cardboard recycling boxes for schools (low cost alternative to plastic)
- Green Cone compost system for backyard food waste composting
- Roll-offs (open and closed-top) and compactors for drop-offs and transfer stations
- Larger curbside set-out containers for single stream recycling (>18 gal, but not wheeled carts which are cost prohibitive for some munis)
- Worm bins (for schools)
- Office recycling containers with lids for single stream recycling.
- Guidance on procurement of biodegradable products (e.g. food service ware) for school cafeterias, to facilitate food waste composting.
- Yard waste/chipping and grinding services with a certain number of “free” hours allocated per municipality annually.
- Roll-off/container welding and repair services

E-Waste management: Municipalities need assistance in identifying responsible e-waste recyclers. Public concern over mishandling of e-waste through exporting to developing countries is a big issue. The pool of vendors in Mass is large; but only two vendors are on state contract. MassDEP should provide guidelines, certification process and audits to e-waste vendors to identify those that are legitimately managing the material.

Brooke explained the current regulatory environment for cathode ray tube (CRT) management in Mass and the US EPA’s rules on exporting CRTs and e-waste. She also mentioned e-waste producer responsibility legislation that has been reintroduced and which, if passed, would likely require MassDEP to certify e-waste recyclers that wish to participate in the state’s e-waste management system.

MassDEP could help municipalities by providing a contract template for an e-waste recycling vendor that includes best management practices, an annual audit (paid for by the vendor), and unannounced site inspections.

Sharps and Pharmaceuticals Management:

Participants also expressed the need for sharps collection containers on state contract and for education on the proposed/upcoming sharps disposal ban (July 2010). Training for municipal officials on how to manage sharps collection is needed. One participant noted that the “Voyager” sharps container is on state contract (contact at Operational Services Division: Dmitriy.Nikolayev@state.ma.us)

Several participants believe MassDEP should be more proactive on managing surplus/unwanted pharmaceuticals/medications. Sarah Weinstein explained that the Department of Public Health is the key agency for these issues. She also explained that studies show that 80% of the waste impacts from medications is through human waste (medications are not processed well by the human body); only 20% of the waste comes through disposal of unused/unwanted medications.

Regional Services:

Participants discussed models for regional services, such as yard waste/brush grinding. MassDEP provided tub grinders to municipalities in the early 90s to function as regional grinding sites for brush. Some participants pointed out equipment sharing is difficult because the

host municipality often shoulders a greater burden for maintenance than other communities. Sharon Kishida (MassDEP MAC) explained the regional contracts for yard waste grinding in her district; a vendor brings mobile equipment and performs on-site grinding at multiple locations. A fee structure (per hour, per day) is set and municipalities buy the services as needed.

Fostering more regional programs/organizations: Brooke asked representatives of regional solid waste/recycling organizations to share their insights and experiences on successful regional models and what the barriers and incentives are:

- Municipalities will form regional groups if they are required to or they want to (because of money saving potential). There must be a common goal to unite the group.
- History of regional groups: Solid Waste Act of 1987 provided funds for state to regionalize solid waste management; this led to development of Springfield Materials Recovery Facility (MRF). Funds also were provided for feasibility studies of regional models and for staff to develop regional organizations. This funding was pivotal in forming most of the solid waste/recycling districts in Western Mass.
- Brooke noted that the original plan for MassDEP to build 5 more MRFs in other parts of the state was not implemented because the private sector filled the need by building MRFs in un-served areas.
- Participants from eastern Massachusetts would like MassDEP to serve as a facilitator between private MRFs and municipalities to provide oversight and consistency.
- Central Mass participants discussed the need for state funding for regional drop-off facilities (similar to Blackstone's Regional Recycling Facility) that would be open to residents, small businesses, and private haulers in multiple communities, on a fee-based system. Access to facilities like this is critical due to the large number of "washed-hands" municipalities in central Massachusetts (i.e. no solid waste services are provided by the municipality).
- The Town of Groton's recycling facility was mentioned as another successful model.
- Participants believe MassDEP must provide seed funding for regional coordination and development of new groups where the need exists. Needs include legal consultation, structuring of organization, and initial staffing to survey community needs and create initial programs.
- MassDEP funded start-up of the North Central Regional Solid Waste Cooperative (now Mass Toss) through a technical assistance grant. The Cooperative now has 10 member towns that pay an annual assessment to fund the executive director.
- Start-up funding needs to be multi-year; one year is not sufficient to incubate the concept, bring towns aboard, and demonstrate the benefits. Long term, these investments pay off.
- MassDEP's MACs function as "change agents" – through the in-kind technical assistance grants, by introducing new concepts to communities that haven't considered working collaboratively. MACs can help establish the common ground, but allocation of MAC time needs to be multi-year (instead of the one-year grant cycle) to help get programs off the ground. Requiring annual applications for MAC time creates barriers and slows the process.
- Multi-year assistance enables longer term vision and planning to take place and would be more productive.

- MACs are critical because they champion ideas and help enable the political process and the local level by giving credibility to programs.
- Providing incentive payments to communities (as in MassDEP’s former Municipal Recycling Incentive Program) also seeds program development and political buy-in of municipal leaders.
- By MassDEP setting “standards” (e.g. MRIP criteria) and attaching a reward (incentive payment), municipal staff are empowered to “sell” the concepts to decision-makers; the concept is legitimized/has credibility and is more likely to be embraced.

Recycling at Multi-Family Buildings: Brooke provided some background on prior MassDEP efforts to close the gap in multi-family recycling services. MRIP criteria required municipalities to provide recycling service directly or require it by private haulers (through Board of Health authority) for multi-family buildings. MassDEP also provided wheeled carts for multi-family recycling. Comments/discussion included:

- Municipalities and MassDEP need better understanding of their regulatory authority to direct private haulers to deliver recyclables from their customers (multi-family/commercial) to designated recycling facilities. Is this legal?
- Brooke stated that Boards of Health have broad regulatory authority on solid waste and recycling, under Massachusetts General Law. The City of Attleboro has a model program that requires all private haulers to provide recycling to their commercial customers; this levels the playing field when it’s strictly enforced.
- Not all boards of health have the time or inclination to regulate solid waste
- Brooke mentioned that her staff is creating a database of municipal recycling ordinances including hauler regulations and requirements; this information will be shared with municipalities to encourage greater use of these tools and regulatory authority. Model ordinances and bylaws in soft copy will be available.
- Western Massachusetts communities (through MRIP) held successful meetings with haulers; the MAC was key in organizing this. MassDEP should facilitate a dialogue between municipalities and haulers to identify common goals, barriers and incentives to work together.
- Haulers value standardized municipal contracts, instead of multiple different contract requirements; MassDEP could help facilitate this standardization with municipalities.

If MassDEP has financial resources: Brooke solicited input from participants on how MassDEP could best assist municipalities and regional groups were some level of financial incentives to become available. Comments/discussion:

- Broad consensus that the MRIP program should be brought back.
- MassDEP should provide financial assistance for communities purchasing wheeled carts for single stream recycling, in the same way they assist with Pay-As-You-Throw start-up. A per household incentive payment for cart purchase would help offset major capital cost which can be barrier to converting to single stream recycling.
- Additional MACs are needed (they are spread too thin)
- Providing Business Assistance Coordinators would also be highly beneficial.
 - Statewide data and TA, access to data, forecasting

- More input into what MACs do
- In a “new” MRIP program, there should be a competitive and non-competitive tier. The non-competitive tier would have minimum eligibility criteria. MassDEP should seek input on what this “lowest common denominator” standard would be.
- MassDEP should also consider different/multiple metrics for measuring performance and progress in an MRIP type program (e.g. a higher per ton incentive payment could be made for organics, than for other more easily and commonly recycled materials).
- Some felt that all municipalities should receive MassDEP provided recycling education materials if they met a minimum standard.
- MassDEP should also require that all payments to municipality be used ONLY for recycling/waste reduction activities (not general fund).
- MassDEP could provide this in a program contract.
- Some municipalities accrued sizable amount of MRIP payments and did not spend them; should there be a cap on accrual of funds and requirement that funds be expended at certain intervals to support recycling/waste reduction?
- PAYT should be mandatory (not an MRIP criteria); the state needs to require this of ALL municipalities.
- MassDEP should help create a certification program for municipal recycling coordinators to legitimize their function and set minimum standards/expectations.
- MassDEP should abandon the Department Approved Recycling Program (DARP). Or, as an alternative, require municipalities that participate in an MRIP-type program to forego DARP participation, so that their loads would be subject to comprehensive inspections at disposal facilities and transfer stations.
- Municipalities need capital to replace recycling equipment (ongoing needs for roll-offs, containers).
- Local discretion on where to spend funds is important.
- Need to figure out how regional groups can benefit from MRIP also (instead of just acting as pass-through for funds to member towns).

Meeting wrap-up: The meeting participants felt that due to time constraints, they do not think a third workgroup meeting is necessary. They would rather review the summary of priorities strategies and needs as developed at the first two meetings of the workgroup and respond by email with final comments and fine-tuning. It was also agreed that a separate discussion of reuse strategies would be important to hold when key players were assembled (including building material reuse center operators, commercial/institutional reuse programs, municipal swap shop operators, etc).