

**Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection**  
**Organics Subcommittee Meeting Notes**  
**March 14, 2024**

**Meeting Agenda**

- 1:00 – 1:20 MassDEP Update on Food Waste Programs and Progress, John Fischer, MassDEP
- 1:20 – 2:35 Presentations from Recipients of MassDEP Recycling Loan Fund Loans & Recycling & Reuse Business Development Grants
- Ken Verhelle, AgGrid Energy LLC
  - Erin Keohane, Spoonfuls
  - Mary Stucklen, Tommy’s Compost Service
  - Daniel Buonagurio, Recycleworks, Inc.
  - Syed Dong, Black Earth Compost
- 2:35 – 3:00 Open Q&A Session

The presentations are posted with these meeting notes at <https://www.mass.gov/lists/organics-subcommittee-archive>.

**Meeting Questions and Answers**

**MassDEP Update**

Q: What regions in the state are lacking capacity for organics?

A: Participants agreed that there are capacity gaps on Cape Cod and in Southeastern Massachusetts. There is an effort underway to site a regional composting facility in the Upper Cape.

Comment: The state should focus on issues like expiration dates and using “ugly food” to try to prevent food waste ugly food. There also may be opportunities for the state to use state land to site a composting or anaerobic digestion facility.

**AgGrid Energy LLC**

Q: Who do you sell your power to? Is it used behind the grid on the farm or do you have a PPA with someone else?

A: The power is used on the farm and we also have agreements with local towns to purchase energy generated from the anaerobic digestion operation.

Q: Do you have trouble finding takers for digestate?

A: The digestate is applied on farm, so there are no issues with finding an outlet.

Q: Does Ag-Grid haul food waste too?

A: No, we contract with a third party hauler if food waste collection services are needed.

Q: Does source-separated material have to go through the de-packager too?

A: Yes we run source separated food waste through the de-packager as well to slurry the material and remove contaminants if necessary.

Q: Can the de-packager take glass?

A: No, the glass breaks in the machine and then builds up in the drum. We try to separate as much packaging as possible on the tip floor so we don't damage the equipment. Styrofoam is another problem material as it breaks into small pieces and then floats in the digester.

Q: How much does a new anaerobic digestion facility cost?

A: This varies widely depending on the type and size of facility, but an approximate range is between \$5 million to 35 million. The agreement with the utility is also an important financial factor.

### Spoonfuls

Q: How is Spoonfuls funded? Do the organizations/businesses donating food pay a fee?

A: The organizations donating food do not pay a fee. The organization is funded by philanthropic donations, including individual donations, fundraising events, and grants. The grant funding also enabled us to immediately put the new truck to use. If you follow us on social media, you'll see that a week after we got the truck, we were able to rescue 4 pallets of frozen dumplings that would have been wasted!

Q: Have you ever talked with Berkshire Bounty? They do something similar here in western MA. It might be good to hear how they do things as well. Participants expressed interest in working with Spoonfuls to expand into other areas of the state, including the South Coast.

A: Spoonfuls does know Berkshire Bounty. We are interested in growing into other areas of the state, but do not want to compete with other existing food rescue organizations. We are looking to grow into areas that do not currently have adequate food rescue operations.

Discussion Point: Several speakers and participants noted that there may be opportunities to cross-promote services. For example, companies collecting food scraps for composting could refer customers to food rescue organizations for food that is still good to donate. And, food rescue organizations could refer customers to composting organizations for food that is not safe to donate.

### Tommy's Compost Service

Q: Are the farms you tip at are charging you a tip fee? Are they a mix of vegetable farm and animal farms? Had they already been making their own compost? Do they any of them have windrow turners or similar equipment?

A: The farms are a mix of vegetable farms and animal farms. Some had been composting already and some are just looking to get started now. They typically had carbon materials on site already and were looking to add food waste to improve the quality of that compost. The fully operational compost operations do charge a tip fee. The ones that are just starting have not yet charged a tip fee. They do not have windrow turners and instead use loaders to turn piles.

#### Black Earth Compost

Q: How long is the material processed in the new building before it is moved outside?

A: The food scraps and other materials are typically composted in the building for three weeks before they are moved outside.

Q: What is the size of your leachate collection tanks?

A: These are 6,000 gallon tanks, given all of the water content of food scraps. The digestate goes to the Vanguard anaerobic digestion facility in Haverhill.