

**Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)**  
**Solid Waste Advisory Committee**  
**April 25, 2024 - 10:00 am**  
**Meeting Summary**

**Meeting Agenda**

10:00 – Welcome and MassDEP updates (Sean Sylver)  
10:30 – Presentation: Helpsy (Lisa Sciannella) - Textile Collection and Resale  
10:45 – Presentation: HandUp (Erik Dyson) - Mattress Resale and Recycling  
11:00 – Presentation: Computers 4 People (Dylan Zajac) – Electronics Refurbishing  
10:15 – Presentation: Recirclable (Margie Bell) – Reusable Foodware Containers  
11:30 – Presentation: Urban Missionaries of Hope (Walter Doyle) – The Little Store Thrift Shop  
11:45 – Open Discussion  
12:00 – Adjourn

**Meeting Presentations**

The meeting presentations are posted with this summary at <https://www.mass.gov/lists/solid-waste-advisory-committee-archive>.

**Meeting Notes**

Question: Following internal review of 310 CMR 16 siting and 310 CMR 19 facility management regulations this summer, would MassDEP propose going out for public comment or having a SWAC update on these regulations the fall?

Answer: Once MassDEP completes its internal review process, we will proceed to hold public hearings and a public comment period. We will look at including a SWAC briefing on the public hearing draft prior to holding hearings.

Question: Is MRF reporting covered in the (aforementioned) regulations?

Answer: MassDEP has been gathering data from MRFs through existing authority under a formal request for information (RFI) process. A regulatory change is not needed to require more detailed reporting.

Comment: Here is a link for more information on the Sustainable Materials Recovery Program grant: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-sustainable-materials-recovery-program-smrp-municipal-grant> as well as the recent SMRP grant webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQ9X6XHfchU>

Comment: Here is a link to the Reduce, Reuse, Repair Micro-Grant page: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/massdep-reduce-reuse-repair-micro-grant>

Comment: With respect to the update on the C&D Subcommittee market development webinar series on wood, asphalt shingles and gypsum, a participant objected to the terms used for some

of the processes such as “renewable” and “sustainable.” There may not be absolute definitions for those terms but they expressed concern about presenting processes in this way.

### Textiles Recovery

Question: There have been some pretty serious recent news items on the Atacama Desert in Chile - which has favorable/nonexistent import fees – showing the tragedy of a massive dump in the desert. It’s great to use textiles domestically. Much like the R2 certification for e-waste, is there a certification for textiles to confirm they’re used responsibly abroad?

Answer: Helpsy is unaware of one (through the Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles Association or otherwise). The industry unfortunately suffers from a lack of transparency and siloed data. As a certified B Corp, Helpsy undergoes a great deal of scrutiny to earn that certification but that’s the extent for now.

Comment: The vast part of the (textile) problem is over-manufacturing. “Reduce” has to be first and foremost. The fast fashion problem is only getting worse. We need to look at reforms.

Response (Helpsy): That’s a huge problem and somewhere we need policy. New York has a textile EPR bill that has been introduced. There’s SB707 in California. We’re on the cusp of requirements for the brands to do something about it. If you’ve been following the story on Renewcell, not enough brands bought their material because it cost a penny more than virgin material. Some brands are volunteering to be more sustainable. Helpsy does work with some brands on helping to manage overproduced, returns and damaged items, but it’s a fraction of the big picture.

Comment: MassPIRG is doing a webinar on fast fashion: <https://pirg.org/events/trash-talk-how-students-can-tackle-fast-fashion/>

Question: When thrift stores order items from Helpsy, do Helpsy trucks make the deliveries to make it circular?

Answer (Helpsy): If it’s in our operations footprint, definitely. We’ll make that part of our regular route. However, if it’s a buyer in California, for example, we ship it.

Question: If clothing is collected in Massachusetts, does it stay in Massachusetts?

Answer (Helpsy): Right now, sorting happens in New Jersey. We warehouse the material in Massachusetts until we have enough of the material we want to make the trip down. Going forward, a goal is to have sorting done locally in Massachusetts.

### Mattress Reuse and Recycling

Question: What criteria is used to determine whether a mattress is resale-worthy?

Answer: 97 percent of mattresses HandUp receives are end of life and should not be resold. There are three components we look at: age of mattress (and luckily every mattress tagged with a manufacturing date – we need it to be less than three years old), wear and tear, and brand. We understand the retail value of certain brands and some inexpensive brands are comprised of poor-quality materials, meaning they’re not suitable for resale.

Question: Can you talk about the market tanking for cotton scraps?

Answer (HandUp): Foam and cotton scraps both go to the carpet industry, where we've seen a real drop in demand over the past year and a half compared to virgin materials. Many manufacturers don't want the material right now, creating a cost for HandUp.

### Reusable Food Service Ware

Question: Legislation in Germany requires restaurants to offer reusable food service ware as an alternative to single-use. Did restaurants respond by fully adopting reusables?

Answer (Recyclable): The majority still do offer single use. But the broad visibility of this law contributes to the traction for greater adoption of more reusables.

Comment: The Reduce and Reuse team at MassDEP is working with RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health on stakeholder sessions with local health officials, reusable service ware providers, and other stakeholders to develop best practices for food ware reuse. If you would like to learn more, join the Reduce and Reuse Working Group: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massdep-reduce-reuse-rr-working-group>

Comment: RecyclingWorks will have a short update on reusable service ware Best Management Practices at the next R&R group meeting.

Question: Regarding Life Cycle Assessments - durable items have a larger footprint (to produce) than single use. You usually must reuse them a number of times to cross the emissions threshold. Has Recyclable done an assessment of how many times it takes to have a positive environmental impact?

Answer (Recyclable): It varies based on the materials you use. Most of Recyclable's food ware is sourced from Preserve. We were motivated by the fact that they are made in the USA and they take them back at end of life. Generally, it can vary from 5-10 to hundreds of uses. We believe ours are about 10 uses. We have a small but loyal group of users who return their containers (98 percent overall). We haven't had to take containers out of commission. We start with a small number at every restaurant because you can always bring more rather than have some thrown out or not be used.

Comment: A statewide mandate for no black plastic takeout containers is needed.

Comment: Recyclable is working in Newton high schools. Kids are growing up seeing single use as normal and we hope to change that.

### Thrift Stores

Question: What's the biggest challenge for a thrift operation?

Answer (Urban Missionaries of Our Lady of Hope): Space. We have three containers for overflow, to store furniture so it doesn't get ruined. Once the items go through the thrift store, we need to find a place for it. We could also use equipment for all the material we have, such as a cardboard or plastic baler. There's no outlet for plastic children's toys. Is there a way to bale the material? Old cutlery - what do we do with? And plastic bottles - MA has no deposit for these.

We collect deposit cans and bottles to fund other programs and get thousands of water bottles with no refund value.

Comment: A participant noted that the updated Bottle Bill legislation is H3690/S2104.

Comment: There is no such thing as waste, just misplaced resources. I think Waneta Trabert said that at the MassRecycle Conference.

Comment: Grateful to have so many grantees that support reuse and repair. The first 3 Rs have the greatest environmental impact, and we thank you for developing meaningful solutions.

Comment: MassDEP needs to make a 60-second video with these compelling stories that drive home the progress made by these projects and show it to the Legislature.

Comment: The more MassDEP can educate the Legislature - especially Chiefs of Staff - on these issues, it would be valuable to help them understand what's happening so they can come up with Legislative solutions.