

MassDEP Reduce & Reuse (R&R) Workgroup Virtual Meeting

Tuesday, May 12, 2020 | 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Reuse Roundtable: The Future and Safety of Reuse in Massachusetts

Meeting Summary

The R&R Working Group is a forum for discussion of source reduction and reuse regulations, policies, and programs in Massachusetts. The group was established to help in the development of a MassDEP Strategic Reduce and Reuse Action Plan as outlined in the **2030 Solid Waste Master Plan**. To learn more about the working group and find past meeting materials, visit: [MassDEP Reduce & Reuse Working Group](#)

This meeting was held virtually and facilitated by Erin Victor, Environmental Analyst, MassDEP erin.victor@mass.gov. A total of 108 people participated in the 5/12/2020 meeting. The discussion sections reflect both written and spoken comments and questions from participants.

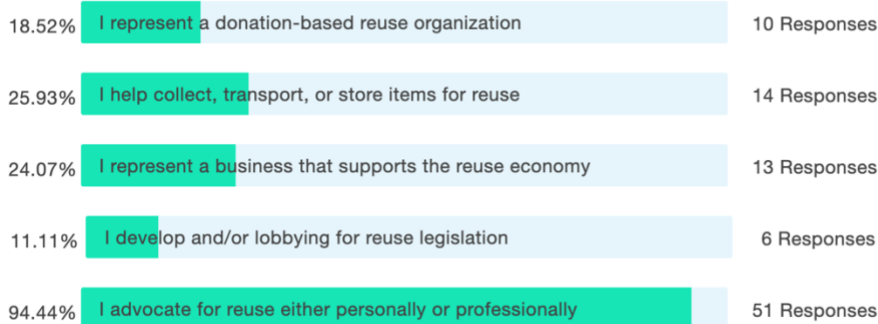
Meeting Discussion Topics:

The intention of this conversation was not for MassDEP to distribute set guidelines for how reuse organizations should re-open or operate in response to COVID-19. However, as part of the Reduce & Reuse process, MassDEP has heard how important networking amongst reuse stakeholders is and decided to host this “ad hoc” meeting (the Reuse Roundtable discussion) to allow reuse stakeholders to share ideas, tools, and strategies with each other in order to help support reuse operations here in MA.

Presentation slide deck can be found [here](#).

- Learn how other reuse organizations are adjusting to the disruptions in operations from the COVID-19 pandemic
- Explore the various operating procedures reuse organizations are putting into place to ensure the safety of employees, volunteers, donors, and customers
- Discuss preparations for the anticipated increase in donated goods when reuse organizations resume “normal” operations

Poll: How are you involved in or supporting reuse here in MA?



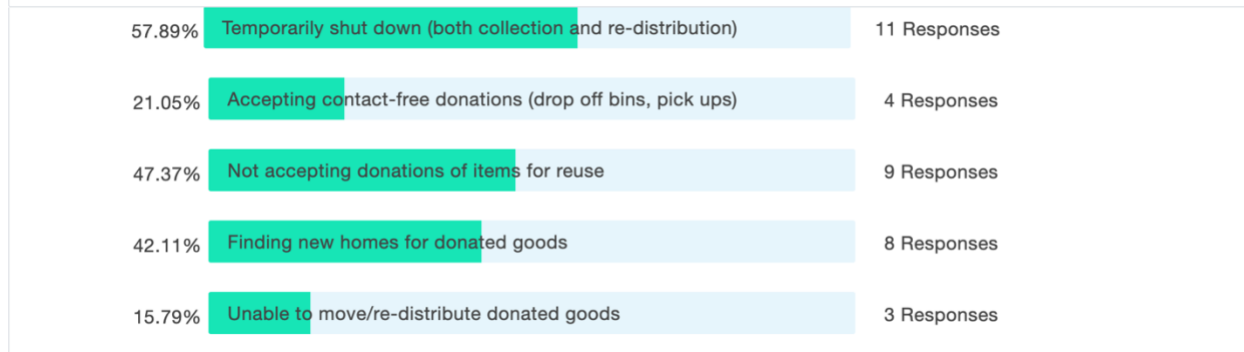
Resources

MassDEP quickly recapped a few helpful external resources to inform the discussion. These resources are hyperlinked in the slide deck [here](#). This is by no means an exhaustive list and again MassDEP encouraged participants to use the [listserv](#) to share additional resources amongst each other.

How are MA reuse organizations adjusting to operational disruptions?

- have you shut down your reuse organization completely?
- have you continued to accept and process donated items for reuse? And how? (i.e. servicing collection drop-off bins//scheduled pick-ups)
- what protocols do you have in place for staff processing donated items?
- are you able to distribute/move any items for reuse? (i.e online platform to request furniture or shipping textile donations to export market?)

Poll: Our reuse organization is:



Discussion:

Swap Shops:

Amy Donovan, [Franklin County Solid Waste Management District](#): Most swap shops are temporarily closed. People are chomping at the bit to get in.

Nancy Irwin, Medfield, MA: Swap shop is usually open 3x/week in May – Sept at the transfer station. They have not opened up and not sure they'll be able to since they typically get 300-500 people come through every day so hard to enforce restriction on how people come in. How to enforce social distancing? Any advice on how to ensure safety? Have any swap shops opened at all across the state?

Rachel Smith, MassDEP: Recycling center in Melrose is currently limiting two cars at a time at recycling center. Line of cars trying to get in.

Claire Galkowski, [South Shore Recycling Cooperative](#) (SSRC): None of the Swap shops on South Shore are open but Claire has heard some are open in nearby communities.

Brooke Nash, MassDEP: Commented that she has also heard some towns are scheduling appts for people to come in to swap shops and some munis are encouraging swapping via social media (i.e. buy nothing groups) or freecycle. No specific examples of which towns were given.

Several others echoed that their local swap shops were closed including in Hudson (Jackie Gillis), Dover (Carol Lisbon).

Mary Ann Remolador, [North East Recycling Council](#) (NERC): Recommended limit the number of people who can enter a tent (or swap shop shed) at one time.

Veronique, MassDEP MAC in Western Massachusetts: mentioned that Monson is planning to open up a swap table at their municipal building in lieu of their swap shop. They are advertising on Facebook, and setting up times for residents to come in and drop-off or pick up so that there is no contact. This is a new program so there is no information yet on how well it is/will be working.

Irene Congdon, MassDEP MAC for Central Mass: mentioned that an option for swap shops would be not to have a swap, but just a donation collection.

Susan Waite, Town of Northhampton: commented that a key problem is that many swap shop volunteers are over 65 YO. We won't be able to staff our swap shop.

Carol Lisbon, Town of Dover: Asked if DEP will be providing guidelines for opening swap shops?

Molly Ettenborough, [City of Newburyport](#): Mentioned she'd be interested in hearing more about guidelines people are setting up for being open besides the typical safety measures. Will Mass DEP be writing up some guidelines?

Reuse Organizations:

Mary Ann Remolador, NERC: asked if textiles still being collected in collection boxes?

Charlotte Milan, Town of Arlington: commented that Arlington moved their [Bay State Textile](#) and More Than Words (book) collection bins to a 24/7 location, whereas usually they are only open during recycling center events. Both of these organizations are managing to service the bins well.

[More Than Words](#) is both collecting books (servicing their drop-off bins) and selling used books online.

Multiple communities reported that [Simple recycling](#) – textile pick-ups have restarted.

Jackie Gillis - [Fresh Start Furniture Bank](#) reported that Bay State Textiles is still collecting clothing and textiles from collection bins and that employees use appropriate PPE.

Sharon Martens, [Household Goods](#) (furniture and goods bank in Acton) has started using an inexpensive online sales/shopping platform ([WooCommerce](#)) to allow customers to shop for items. The customer comes at an appointed time (they use [Sign up Genius](#)) to claim their items; staff loads into car so there is minimal contact or interaction between staff and customer. They have not been accepted donations but looking into opening this up by appointment.

UPDATE (5/22/2020): Household Goods is now accepting (and quarantining) a limited number of drop-off donations by appointment only. Here are their [Donation Guidelines](#).

Note: Swap Shops could consider using a similar system for residents to schedule appointments to "shop" and donate at the municipal swap shops.

Deb Beatty-Mel, [Boston Building Resources](#): commented that they continue to accept high value donations. After they've picked up the materials, they let them sit in their truck for 3 days before unloading. Sales have been limited to online/appointment based, either through Craigslist ads or customers who email us about seeking a particular item. Donation pick-ups must be curbside, in a garage or driveway.

Ashley Muspratt, [Eco-Building Bargains](#): the store (in Springfield, MA) has moved to virtual shopping by appointments with a personal shopper and individual video conferencing to show customers what's available. We've also continued sales on eBay. We've continued to receive donations, mostly from contractors and building material stores doing cleanouts of their stock.

John Fantasia, [ReStream](#): they have just started collecting furniture and other goods from colleges/universities. Students left a lot of stuff, some not realizing they wouldn't be back. Since materials have been untouched for several months, they feel it's safe to handle. Have 5-7 truckloads of furniture available. Contact John if you know of orgs that could use it. (connection made w/Household Goods - they are interested!).

Meredith Chicklis, [MI-BOX](#): MI-BOX Moving and Mobile Storage could be a potential solution for mobile furniture banks. They can be placed at reuse organizations for residents to leave items, or placed at designated spots for waste management companies to leave their reusable items. Meredith said they are happy to be a resource!

Irene Congdon, MassDEP MAC for Central Mass: Mentioned that Central Mass reuse organizations are looking to work with the libraries which are currently closed. They can be a collection site for reuse items, even couches, furniture, mattresses and household items.

Amy Donovan, Franklin County Solid Waste District: Salvation Army in western Mass is emptying 120 drop boxes in the Pioneer Valley with a skeleton crew; only 2 staff members. They are not able to really process this material now, but they will. They have a large warehouse in Springfield.

Claire Galkowski, South Shore Recycling Cooperative (SSRC): Is there a list of orgs that are accepting donations now? Would DEP be able to host a page where donation centers could indicate whether they are open or not?

Repair

Peter Mui, [Fix-it Clinics](#) have been operating virtually, with fix-it coaches and participants with broken items from around the world. Three held so far, and all very successful. Held via Zoom. Next one is 3 pm eastern time, Sunday, May 17. All are welcome.

Virtual Fixit Clinic Sunday 5/17:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/237037094304821/>

-participant registration form at <http://bit.ly/fixitcheckin>

-Fixit Coach sign-in at: <http://bit.ly/fixitcoachsignup>

Virtual Fixit Clinic Sat May 30 2PM: You're Invited

We've got a Virtual Fixit Clinic this Sat May 30 2PM and all Fixit Coaches are heartily invited even if just to observe, learn and cross-train: sign up well in advance at <http://bit.ly/fixitcoachsignup> to get the Zoom link via email.

WHAT: Virtual (and Global!) Fixit Clinic DLIV (554) Harvard University Cambridge MA US
WHEN: Saturday May 30 2PM EDT (=18:00 GMT =20:00 CET =14:00 EDT =13:00 CDT =Noon MDT
=11:00 PDT)

<https://www.facebook.com/events/2971400592907295/>

Any local repair community can participate in Virtual Fixit Clinics so please encourage your friends and neighbors to sign up with things to fix at <http://bit.ly/fixitcheckin> (And remember: we can look at large things like dishwashers, TVs and furniture now.)

Ray Pfau, [Bolton Repair Cafe](#): is holding a virtual repair event on June 20. Check out this web site for more info: <http://www.boltonlocal.org/initiatives/repair-cafe>

Irene Congdon, MassDEP MAC for Central Mass: Suggested that we not just look at repair but also redesign (i.e. change a entertainment center to a kids kitchen) repurpose the material- take apart and use the wood for shelves make a new table. Great example is the Harvard college cutting desks to make end tables.

Peter Mui, Fix-it Clinics: mentioned Fixit Clinic is doubling down on repairing and keeping things in service rather than continuing the product churn: especially with clothing/fabric and textile repair. They started new movement [#"fix at home"](#). He encouraged folks to use the #FixAtHome hashtag encouraging people to use this time at home to develop the skills to keep things repaired and working.

Janine Bishop, MassDEP: I have lots of luck with minor repair of items using google/you tube.

Peter Mui, Fix-it Clinic: The larger question is: how do we nudge/tweak the exit trajectory out of this current situation to bring what we consider growth into better alignment with nurturing and sustaining life?

There is also a new issue coming online as everyone starts using PPE, e.g. stores and nursing homes: how do we make sure these are not disposable?

Q: [What steps are you putting into place to ensure the safety of employees, volunteers, donors, and customers?](#)

Examples heard so far: Wearing gloves, leaving items for 3-5 days, virtual shopping

No further comments.

Bring Your Own (BYO)/ Status of Current Policies Promoting Single-Use Items:

Karine Vann: commented that it seems like if BYO becomes institutionalized, the alternative would cost money. (Like for example the reusable to-go cup services.) wouldn't that disincentivize reuse? Would MassDEP or municipalities consider getting involved? (Like public-private partnership, like the bikeshare programs?)

Derek Neilson, [Coffee Cup Collective](#): discussed the Coffee Cup Collective model, with rotating stock of reusable cups at participating coffee shops and a dishwashing system. BYO is inconvenient in that you have to bring the cup to get it refilled, and there is also some potential for cross-contamination depending on how clean the cups are. CCC build a safe and sanitary solution via a stainless-steel cup. They make sure the process is as low touch as possible, but now they will have to solidify that with consumers. But this has been challenging with most small food service closed. They are using the

downtime to envision new, more efficient system of reusables that will allow them to lower the cost barrier to make reusable coffee cup use as cheap and ubiquitous as possible, because we can only achieve economy of scale as more people use the service. So far haven't translated cost to cafes themselves, (wanted to limit barriers), but as safety of consumer becomes more important, they are taking this as a strategic opportunity to play with how they do things and see how that plays out in terms of a relaunch. Want to protect staff as well as customers by making service as efficient and sanitary as possible.

Brooke Nash, MassDEP: municipalities could use [Recycling Dividends Program](#) funds to start a mini-grant to help small food service businesses buy reusables utensils, plates, etc. Businesses needing dishwashers could apply to the MassDEP Reuse Micro-Grant.

John Hite, [Conservation Law Foundation \(CLF\)](#): commented that Bring Your Own and other efforts to reduce single use plastics has new urgency. The CDC guidelines that went to the White House recommended single use, disposable food service ware for all restaurants and food service but White House did not act on it. MassDEP and it's sister agencies in other states need to be vocal and continue to work on reducing single use plastics, as articulated in the draft [Solid Waste Master Plan](#). What is MassDEP doing to promote evidence-based policy and practices for reusable vs. single use items such as bags?

Proposal: Need guidance from state agencies around single-use and sustainability to encourage reusable and non-disposable systems and practices for restaurants.

Claire Galkowski, SSRC: Mentioned that we should include single use paper products too in this discussion since they are also bad.

Janet Domenitz, [MassPIRG](#): commented that as far as she knows, the CDC has not said anything about curtailing redeeming deposit containers or stopping the use of reusable bags. Can DEP help to re-start redemption and reusable bags in MA?

Claire Galkowski, South Shore Recycling Cooperative: Do you know if reuse orgs are represented on the Governor's advisory group regarding reopening?

- These are all the members: <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/reopening-advisory-board>;
- Comments can be sent to the Reopening Advisory Board here: <https://www.mass.gov/forms/submit-comments-to-the-reopening-advisory-board>

Jackie Gillis, Fresh Start Furniture Bank: Considering the information UPSTREAM collected, is DEP working with the administration to reverse the reusable bag ban?

Christin Walth, Newburyport: is there any effort from DEP to persuade the governor's office to rescind the ban on bringing reusable bags?

Amy Perlmutter, [Perlmutter Associates](#): Is there a way that DEP or towns can get the word out to stores, restaurants and to reuse organizations about reuse vs disposables? Can DEP develop information that advocates and town health and recycling officials can refer to?

Amy Perlmutter, Perlmutter Associates: I heard that CDC draft guidelines were going to encourage restaurants to use disposable menus, plates, etc. Is anyone at DEP working with the governor's office or Health Dept to make sure that this doesn't happen in MA?

Louise Amyot: In Greenfield, we started a group calling ourselves Friends of Reusable Bags (FoRB), using the model and help of BagShare. We use empty grain and seed bags and grommets to make reusable shopping bags. We held several workshops before COVID-19. We are on hold now because of the Governor's order. The members of our group are trying to refuse bagging by the stores, taking our purchases out to our cars in the shopping carts and bagging them there. But it is a losing battle. The plastics industry is too powerful

Margy Gassel, Ashland: voiced her concern about the CDC's guidelines for restaurants to use disposables. She stated that just because the president rejected the draft guidelines doesn't mean that particular idea will go away.

Nancy Irwin, Medfield: mentioned that a committee member on our Recycling Committee suggested adding REFUSE to the three R's. This means you can refuse the plastic bag at checkout. Put your own groceries in the shopping cart, then transfer to reusable bags when get to your car.

Peg Hall, Greening Greenfield: I tried to get loose groceries put back in cart during my first post-Covid Supermarket trip last week (at 6 AM!) , and was told they'd need to put stickers on each item, so came home with 18 plastic bags.

Molly Ettenborough, [City of Newburyport](#): What can we all do to get plastic bags and single use bans back in practice. Can we jump to statewide bans now making it easier for all?

Megan Sullivan, Medfield Transfer Station and Recycling Committee: Mentioned she would also love restaurants to be encouraged to ask if people want silverware with their takeout.

MassDEP has announced that MassDEP and the Attorney General's office will resume enforcement of the requirement for retailers to accept bottle bill containers for redemption. This requirement resumed for stores with reverse vending machines on June 5 and will resume for stores with over the counter redemption on June 19. The ban on using reusable bags and the temporary overriding of local plastic bag bans was issued through an Order from the Department of Public Health. MassDEP has raised this issue, however this decision will be made through the Department of Public Health and the Commonwealth's COVID 19 Command Center.

People are starting to wonder what they are going to do with all of the items they would like to donate. If you're still accepting donations, are you seeing an uptick in donations? Have people been giving a lot of calls about where to bring donations?

General feedback from group: There are a lot of calls coming into donation centers. Been taking longer sometimes to find a place to bring items, but there are some orgs that are still collecting.

Betsy Harris, Weymouth Public Schools: even though schools are closed, they are getting a huge increase in donations and bins are being emptied more frequently. Bay State Textile is continuing service and has been good about doing extra pick-ups if needed.

Jackie Gillis (Hudson) and Mary Stucklen (Pittsfield) both commented that there's a lot of activity on freecycle sites and folks don't seem concerned about items moving coming from another home. Have not seen yard or tag sales happening though.

Raymond Ronander, Town of Leicester: Commented that the Leicester Recycle Center has now been open two weeks in a row. They practice social distancing by having three stations and limiting the

number of cars at a time. They are busy on yard waste days and had a very long down the street. They had had a gate person and each station had a monitor to allow no contact transactions. All went well. During the day all glass gets sanitized and sits for 5 days.

Claire Galkowski, SSRC: Mentioned she did a toy and game drive from her house for DCF, and the response was bigger than she could handle. She was unable to find an alternate outlet when this one time collection was over.

Megan Sullivan, Medfield Transfer Station and Recycling Committee: Mentioned in Medfield they've asked people to keep things at home when they are spring cleaning but she is very concerned about how long people will keep things before they will just throw things away. Definitely need to give people options.

Other Comments/Questions/Concerns:

Heidi Sanborn, [National Stewardship Action Council](#): Asked how to get Massachusetts to help NSAC expand the Refuel Your Fun campaign www.refuelyourfun.org? NSAC wants to help MA reduce the number of single use 1lb propane gas cylinders and replace them with refillables but we need local towns and NGOs to partner with us. Please contact Heidi at heidi@nsaction.us or 916-217-1109 if you are interested! It would save a lot of waste and has the partnership of national propane chains and is very pro-business with no opposition or change in law needed.

Norma Chanis, [Wachusett Earthday, Inc.](#): Mentioned that we need a way to better coordinate needs with goods better. Everyone has things to get rid of and there are needs but we are not able to connect with 'all' just a few organizations at best.

Next meeting:

Please mark your calendars for the 4th Wednesday of each month at 11AM

Date: Wednesday, May 27 Time: 11AM - 1 PM

Location: Virtual Register [Here](#).

Meeting topics:

- (1) Follow-up discussion on Creating a Culture of Reduce & Reuse
- (2) Strategies for expanding reuse and repair of household durable goods

Reminders:

1. MassDEP is now accepting applications for the Reduce, Reuse, Repair Micro-Grants for 2020.

This grant program provides small amounts of funding (up to \$5,000) for eligible for-profit and non-profit organizations for innovative, short term waste reduction initiatives. Initiatives must focus on promoting source reduction, reuse, or repair in Massachusetts.

[Micro-Grant Online Application & Grant Guidelines](#)

Still have questions? Contact Erin Victor at erin.victor@mass.gov

2. Join the MA Reduce & Reuse Network

A listserv for anyone interested in source reduction and reuse regulations, policies, and programs in Massachusetts. This is an opportunity to connect with other like-minded people from non-profits, businesses, local and state government, community groups, and passionate Bay Staters. This forum is intended to help people share resources, ideas, best practices, fact sheets, and more.

Join by emailing: [ReduceReuseNetwork-MA+subscribe @googlegroups.com](mailto:ReduceReuseNetwork-MA+subscribe@googlegroups.com)

Share by emailing: reducereusenetwork-ma@googlegroups.com