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

Wednesday, May 27, 2020 | 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM | Meeting Summary

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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](mailto:erin.victor@mass.gov). A total of 81 people participated in the 5/27/2020 meeting. The discussion sections reflect both written and spoken comments and questions from participants.

### Meeting Discussion Topics:

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Presentation slide deck can be found [here](#); a recording of the meeting can be found [here](#).

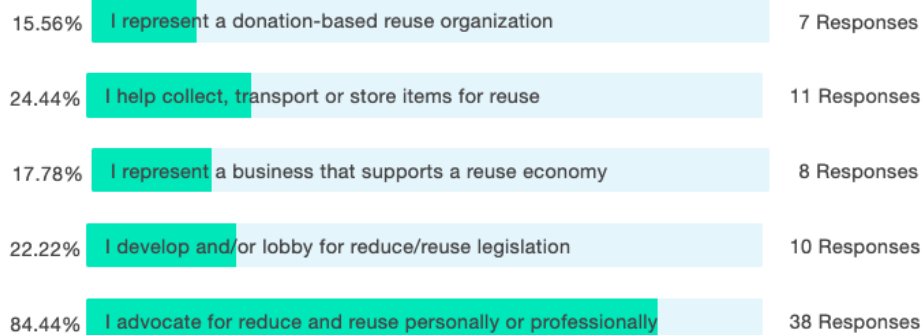
- Follow-up Discussion: Creating a Culture of Reduce & Reuse in MA
- Reuse & Repair of Household Durable Goods

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

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1 of 2. How are you involved in source reduction and reuse here in MA?

Multiple choice with multiple answers



### Part I: Creating a Culture of Reduce & Reuse in MA

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R&R Workgroup reviewed the barriers and strategies discussed at prior workgroup meetings and identified in the pre-meeting survey from February. Past meeting summaries can be found on the workgroup archive page [here](#).

#### Barriers:

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The barriers were grouped into five overall themes:

- Consumers lack the knowledge, attitudes or behaviors that would support a greater cultural adoption of waste reduction and reuse in Massachusetts
- Insufficient access to and convenience of reuse and repair options in Massachusetts
- Need for greater infrastructure support for reuse and repair organizations
- Lack of organization and coordination amongst reuse organizations in Massachusetts
- Resistance to change: status quo interests oppose/resist initiatives to reducing, reusing and repairing consumer goods

The R&R workgroup participants then participated in an online ranking poll to identify which barriers the group should focus on with the R&R Action Plan. Participants were asked to consider the following questions: if we could lower any of these barriers, which one(s) do you think would make the biggest difference in creating a more vibrant source reduction and reuse culture in MA? Which one do you think is the most tangible barrier we can move to get some quick wins and momentum? Given limited funding and staff, where should we focus our efforts?



The in-meeting survey results suggest that (1) consumers lack knowledge, attitudes or behaviors and insufficient access to, and (2) convenience of reuse and repair options are the top barriers, with (3) need for greater infrastructure support following closely behind. However, not all participants were able to participate in the poll (35/81) during the meeting due to technical difficulties and a [follow-up survey](#) was sent out to get more input.

#### Discussion:

- John Hite, [Conservation Law Foundation \(CLF\)](#): Question: are these barriers and solutions all things that DEP can work on? Do we want to discuss all solutions or are we interested in things that only DEP and stakeholders can work on i.e. what are the things we don't have the ability to act on, vs. aspirational initiatives?
- Erin Victor, MassDEP: The final strategic plan will focus on what DEP and its stakeholders can address but we'll also highlight initiatives that partner orgs can work on (i.e.

legislators, etc). For example, MassDEP doesn't make the rules on safety/public health in food establishments, but could we provide input to that process and offer guidance.

- Janet Domenitz, [MassPIRG](#): Question: Are the barriers listed in order? Answer: No.

#### Additional Barriers Identified:

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- Amy Perlmutter, [Perlmutter Associates](#): High rent can be a barrier. Might be cheaper to buy something new if rents are high because repair is not inexpensive.
- Janet Domenitz, MassPIRG: We should put a finer point on resistance to change. Resistance to change is chronically and always coming from special interests who have a stake in the status quo. If they didn't rank that among their top choices, she encourages people to come to hearings about right to repair, container deposit law, etc. the lobbyists and entrenched interests constantly overwhelm the interests of the public. It behooves any public ed campaign to put a spotlight on the forces that resist these changes. At the very least the public needs to understand that it isn't just that individual consumers don't understand that we can take a jackhammer out of the library. There has been a huge push back by large entities against these proposals for years and the public needs to know.
- Peter Mui, [Fix-it Clinics](#): Agrees with Janet but also that we don't want to give customers a pass. Why are we so willing to relinquish our power for independent thought? As consumers, we have our declared preferences (i.e. buying organic, sustainability), but actions show that we behave differently. You could blame manufacturers but also need to ask why individual consumers are so willing to give up our power of independent thought? We need to walk the talk; public agencies need to act themselves, demonstrate and model reuse, lead by example. This can be done at local and state govt level.
- Rob Gogan, Harvard University: From working with a student population that has resources to buy everything new, from lab equip to clothing ... it's so easy to buy new stuff online; it's more complicated to buy used; the logistics are more complicated; inventorying, photographing, packaging, delivering – it takes a lot for used stuff. Those who don't have a car, or time, convenience of online purchasing trumps buying used most of the time. How do we address those barriers?
- Brooke Nash, MassDEP: Behavior change is hard; how do we incentivize it? Reward it? How do we lower the barriers because buying used IS harder, takes more time, might require a car. Are there models for online used goods? (yes, ebay, poshmark, thread up).
- Amy Perlmutter: Policy is also an additional barrier. For example, rolled back reuse initiatives, zoning policies that might work against "junk yards," policies that hold back donation. When working on Boston's zero waste plan they heard a few food rescue groups say that they can pick surplus food up in Cambridge but Boston's public health dept wouldn't let them pick up in Boston.
- Irene Congdon, MassDEP Central MAC: fostering more networking/organization amongst reuse organizations will impact all other items listed. Salvation Army, Savers, Goodwill – they, and furniture banks, need to all communicate on a regular basis facilitated by a paid person.

## COVID-19 as an additional barrier & possible opportunity to promote reuse:

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- Ray Pfau, Rotary Club of Nashoba Valley and Repair Café: People dealing with the coronavirus is a big barrier right now too.
- Marian Rambelle, Newton Solid Waste Commission: The "misconception" about possibly passing germs from reusable containers - this is reinforced by municipalities suspending the requirements for reusable retail bags due to COVID-19.
- Peter Mui: The plastics industry is clawing back in the COVID-19 crisis claiming that single-use is safer
- Ashley Muspratt, Center for EcoTechnology: We've discussed this on earlier meetings, but there will be post-COVID fear of germs that needs to be addressed
- Peter Mui: Many things have changed in the last couple of months since COVID-19, what opportunities does the current crisis offer?
- Kelley Dennings, Center for Biological Diversity: Echoed Peter's point about wanting to see reuse be part of the post COVID transition to a new normal. Any thoughts on working with community colleges on training more folks in this what hopefully will be a new, valuable field going forward?
- Katrina Martin: I wonder with more people working at home due to COVID-19 and probably going forward, if this is going to result in a lot of open commercial real estate that might be available of reuse / fixit centers?

## Strategies:

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Strategies identified by R&R stakeholders in prior workgroup meetings were mapped onto the five barriers. Participants were reminded that While MassDEP will be unable to lead on all of these strategies identified; stakeholders are encouraged to consider acting on initiatives not included in the final Action Plan.

**[1] Barrier:** Consumers lack the knowledge, attitudes or behaviors that would support a greater cultural adoption of source reduction and reuse in Massachusetts

**Identified Strategies:**

- Develop communications plan to help residents adopt best practices for reducing waste, increasing reuse and repair, and extending product lifespans (education campaign similar to Recycle Smart MA)
- Create an online calculator to quantify the environmental, social and economic benefits of choosing reuse/repair/share over purchase and disposal to help Massachusetts residents, businesses and municipalities better understand the benefits of reuse options.

**Example:** [RecycleSmartMA.org](https://www.recycle-smart.org/) – a MassDEP's statewide educational campaign could be done focused on sharing reduce/reuse/repair/share knowledge, tips, best practices, etc. with the general public.

**[2] Barrier:** Insufficient access to and convenience of reuse and repair options in Massachusetts

**Identified Strategies:**

- Develop an online tool/map to help connect Massachusetts residents with reuse/repair/share resources across the state

- Identify and promote the adoption of systems that lower the barriers to reduce/reuse/repair/share (i.e. nudges that make the default option one that supports R&R such as having to opt-in to receive single-use utensils)
- Promote expansion and capacity building for repair events, library of things, tool lending libraries, and swap shops throughout the state

**Example:** [Choose to Reuse](#): Hennepin County, Minnesota. A similar reuse directory could be created for Massachusetts, mapping organizations and businesses across the state to help connect residents with places to donate items, buy second-hand items, repair items, share/borrow and rent.

**[3] Barrier:** Need for greater infrastructure support for reuse and repair organizations

**Identified Strategies:**

- Continue to provide MassDEP micro grants and waste reduction grants to NGOs, businesses, and municipalities to increase capacity of reuse and repair initiatives
- Incentivize municipal investments in reuse/repair/share programs
- Provide trainings and share best practices to institutionalize reuse/repair/share programs
- Develop job training program to support development of repair skills

**Example:** [Reduce, Reuse, Repair Micro-Grants](#)

**[4] Barrier:** Lack of organization and coordination amongst reuse organizations in Massachusetts

**Identified Strategies:**

- Continue to bring R&R stakeholders together frequently to facilitate information sharing/networking
- Facilitate info sharing amongst reuse stakeholders through an online listserv & resource sharing platform/repository
- Identify an agency/organization to take the lead on reuse and coordinate efforts across the state
- Develop and share case studies of successful swap shops/sheds, library of things and tool libraries, and repair and reuse events

**Example:** MA Reduce & Reuse Network - A listserv for anyone interested in source reduction and reuse regulations, policies, and programs in Massachusetts. Connect with other like-minded people from non-profits, businesses, local and state government, community groups, and passionate change agents across the state. 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) Can this be hyperlinks?
- Share by emailing: [reducereusenetwork-ma@googlegroups.com](mailto:reducereusenetwork-ma@googlegroups.com)

**Example:** [Virtual Repair Events](#)

**[5] Barrier:** Resistance to change: status quo interests oppose/resist initiatives to reducing, reusing and repairing consumer goods

**Identified Strategies:**

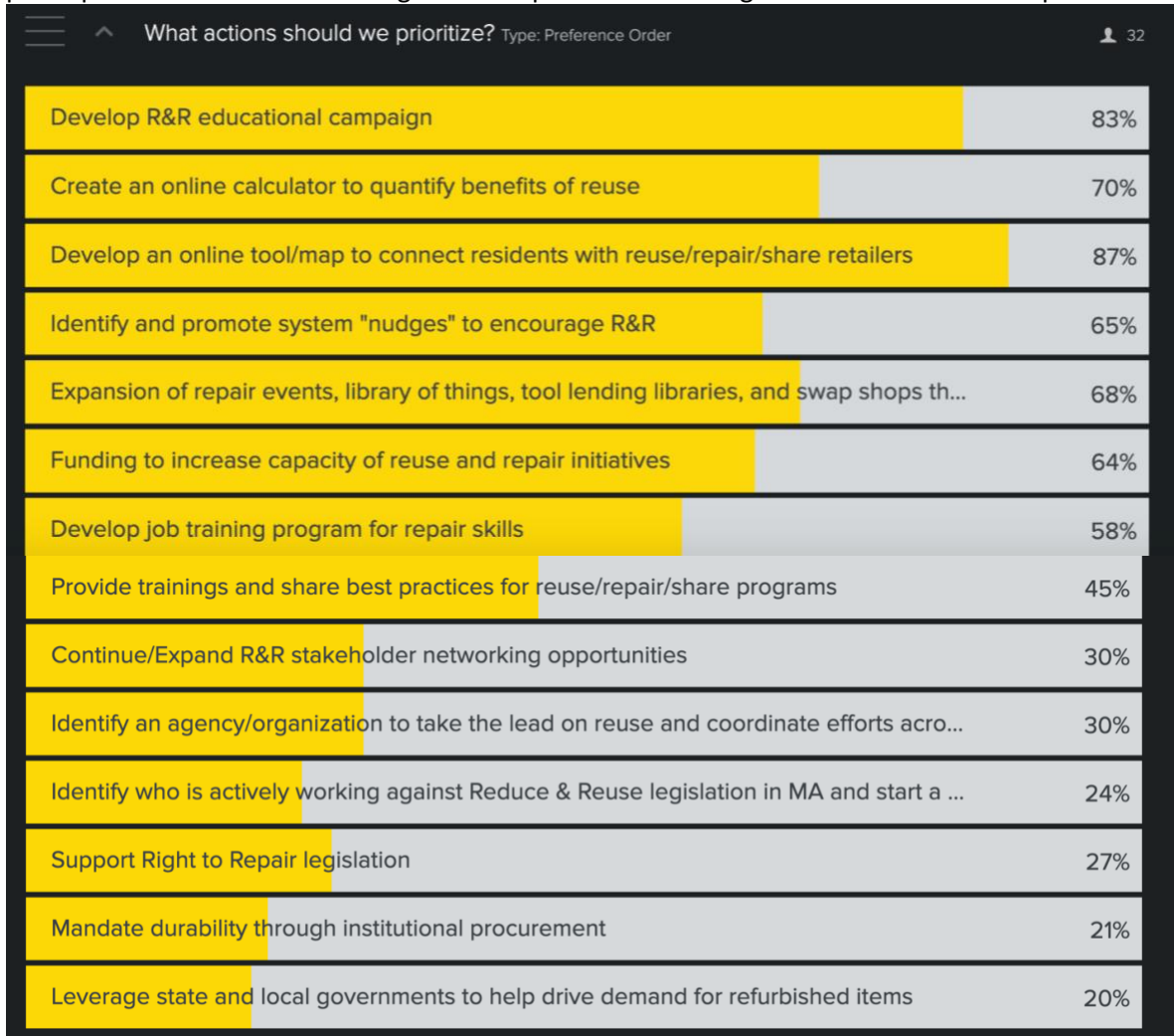
- Identify potential allies for reuse legislation in MA and start a dialogue with legislators (local and state) about reuse/repair. \*\*
- Support Right to Repair legislation.\*\*
- Mandate durability through institutional and public agency procurement.
- Leverage state and local governments to help drive demand for refurbished items like pre-owned, refurbished office equipment, office furniture, etc.

\*\*MassDEP is unable to take lead on legislative initiatives

**Example:** [CT, State Contract: Purchase and Rental of Pre-Owned Office Furniture](#)

Prioritizing strategies to “fast track”:

The R&R workgroup participants then participated in an online ranking poll to identify which strategies participants felt would make the greatest impact towards our goals and that we should prioritize.



The in-meeting survey results suggest that: (1) an online reuse directory and (2) educational campaign were the most supported initiatives. However, not all participants were able to participate in the poll (32/81) during the meeting due to technical difficulties and several indicated they needed more time to consider the different options. A [follow-up survey](#) was sent out to get more input.

### Discussion:

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- Kelley Dennings, Center for Biological Diversity: One way to think about this list is based on priorities now via COVID. What can be worked on while dealing with social distancing versus future, longer-term goals when folks can meet in person?
- Robin Ingenthron, Good Point Recycling: Explained the negative impact mining subsidies have on promoting reuse. One critical strategy would be advocating for the reform of the General Mining Act of 1872.
- Ryan Kingston, DOER: a strategy related to consumer knowledge - getting cultural institutions to help disseminate information (e.g. museums and zoos where many people gather)
- Peter Mui, [Fix-it Clinics](#): Some of my latest experiments explore the idea that consumers might follow government's lead: that our government institutions "walk-the-talk" of Reuse & Repair with the durable goods we own together -- shared public property, our community-held assets -- and act responsibly (and in the public interest) repairing and maintaining goods rather than discarding them. (Corporations too, e.g. Microsoft's announcement to go carbon net-negative, Delta's announcement to go carbon-neutral, etc.)
- Ray Pfau, Rotary Club of Nashoba Valley and Repair Café: when educating about reuse, we should clarify that recycling is still important but that we cannot solve our waste problem with recycling along.
- Amy Perlmutter: Regarding the barrier of insufficient access, developing model policy for health depts (if needed) to promote more reuse at restaurants (mugs, Go Boxes, etc) is a potential strategy.

### MA Reuse Directory:

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- Several participants indicated that they were very excited about this tool and bringing it to Massachusetts.
- Ray Pfau: how do we reach people who are technologically challenged?
- Wendy Tram, Fuss & O'Neill: We have to make it easy for consumers to access educational materials on say, recycling. The online mapping tool is a great idea. It might also be worth considering collaborating with a tech company to design an app indicating what can be recycled, reuse, etc. I use an app called fooducate, which allows you to scan barcodes of food items and it provides you nutritional info. Just a thought!
- Erik Wegwiser, Intelligent Database, LLC: I'm a database developer and would like to see how I can help.
- Kevin Maguire, Habitat for Humanity MetroWest Greater Worcester ReStore: We have 2 locations under 2 years old. Our biggest obstacle is the cost of marketing/advertising and educating the public of who we are, what we offer in our retail locations and why



we do what we do. Additionally Baby/Toddler and children equipment such as play pens, used car seats, etc.. These items are very difficult to repurpose due to recalls and liability.

- Amy Perlmutter: The City of Boston did a survey of all reuse/repair businesses in the City. They wanted to post it on their website but their lawyer said no. It would be great to have that on the DEP site or elsewhere.

## **Part II: Reuse & Repair of Household Durable Goods**

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In MassDEP's [Draft Solid Waste Master Plan \(SWMP\)](#), the Source Reduction and Reuse section indicates a number of priority materials to focus on based on the results of past [waste characterization studies](#), toxicity of the various material streams, and the potential for diversion.

The R&R workgroup will meet to discuss each of these material streams in greater detail to determine the barriers to promoting greater reduction or reuse of the materials and identify potential actions for addressing these barriers.

### **These are the priority materials indicated in the draft SWMP:**

- Durable goods including appliances
- electronics and furniture
- single use packaging and food service products
- wasted food
- building materials
- transportation and distribution packaging
- Textiles?

At the kickoff meeting, the group decided to break out the discussions on electronics and to add institutional/commercial furniture as a separate reuse stream from household furniture and goods. These will be discussed later in the R&R action planning process.

The group started the conversation by discussing the definition of durable goods (for the purpose of the meeting summary, the terms consumer goods and household durable goods were used interchangeably) to come to a shared understanding of what we would focus on.

### **Definition of durable goods:**

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The Bureau of Economic Analysis (U.S. Department of Commerce) defines **durable goods** as: "Tangible products that can be stored or inventoried and that have an average life of at least three years." They define **consumer durable goods** as: "Commodities, such as motor vehicles, that are purchased by consumers and are used repeatedly or continuously over a prolonged period."

Examples include: automobiles, appliances, furniture, tableware, tools and equipment, sports equipment, luggage, telephones and electronics, musical instruments, books and jewelry



Participants identified other durable goods to consider during these discussions: medical equipment (CPAPs and BiPAPs as alternatives to ventilators, crutches, walkers, wheelchairs); laboratory and research test and diagnostic equipment, Landscaping material (fencing, hoses, lighting), Cooking implements, Toys – large plastic toys/ recreational items (jungle gyms, play houses), Rugs, Art supplies/school supplies/office supplies, Pet supplies (fish tanks, leashes, bowls), Media (dvds, records), Luggage/sports equipment

## MA Reuse Directory

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With all the support for the idea of an online reuse mapping tool, the MassDEP team would like to start building out the list of reuse, repair, sharing/lending retailers in Massachusetts. MassDEP has an existing online directory called [Beyond the Bin](#), for non-traditional materials, but it doesn't currently include repair/share options.

R&R participants workgroup participants were invited to survey their local communities and help populate the backend of a directory similar to the [Choose To Reuse](#) tool in Hennepin County. **All R&R workgroup members are encouraged to submit retailers to be included in the directory using [this form](#).**

Based on the material categories from Hennepin County, Erin asked attendees to suggest any categories that are missing. Participants identified: Computers; collectibles (trading cards, coins), pet supplies, hardware, mattresses, luggage, art supplies, paint, dorm supplies, (mini fridges, linens), hand tools, power tools, lawn tools, packing materials

## Discussion:

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- Peter Mui, [Fix-it Clinics](#): My thinking has modulated on this: 1) add the idea of Rescue, 2) suppress word "Household" As in RESCUE, Reuse & Repair of (Household) durable goods E.g.: Rescue, Reuse & Repair of Durable Goods (Household or otherwise)
- Peter Mui: My immediate reaction/concern is that <https://airtable.com/shritqRieYZI54YQ5> doesn't really address source reduction. While it does try to address the hemorrhaging on the downstream side and achieve some landstream diversion it may just reinforce for consumers that it's OK to keep consuming the same ways.
- Kelley Dennings, Center for Biological Diversity: Another comment in regard to priorities - We need to work both upstream to build better systems for reuse and downstream to incite individuals to reuse. I wouldn't want to see all the priorities be downstream without support to improve upstream systems.
- Packaging materials were brought up as a possible material to include in the reuse directory, however are they a durable good? Should the directory include materials that may not "last for 3 years" per the official definition of a durable good?
- Miriam Kamanker, Goodwill of the Berkshires: for the directory, we need to think about children's gear since the sale of certain items requires checking govt recalls (helmets, toys, car seats). It's very complicated, it changes on daily basis practically. This is a significant barrier because it requires a lot of time to stay on top of this and let stores know. Also, reuse stores are licensed by health dept. So pillows, mattresses, and textiles have to be new in the packaging or disinfected to ensure they don't have lice. The VT (Goodwill) store has re-opened and they are quarantining items for 3 days and spraying disinfectant to address concerns related to COVID-19.

- Peter Mui: Agreed with Miriam, we need common-sense regulations around selling second-hand goods. E.g. the whole child car seat expiration date is a manufacturer scam, the Europeans have exposed this.
- Susan Waite, Northhampton: recalls are mostly an issue if something is SOLD. I don't think the rules apply in the same way if you are gifting. Same with disinfecting.
- John Fantasia, ReStream: There are office furniture, refurbishment companies similar to the CT one mentioned that are located in Springfield area; would love to talk with DEP about this. There is so much office furniture that could be shared with school systems; could we resume that conversation from December 2018? Lots of wood desks, wood bookcases that are hard to resell but could be donated as they are in good shape.
- Amy Perlmutter, Perlmutter Associates: There is a very active Zero Waste Mass FB group. We need to develop a list of these FB groups, b/c there are thousands of likeminded people across the state that are interested, but not aware of MassDEP's resources (i.e. Buy Nothing FB groups, and FB yard sale groups, plus Next-Door networks). How can we generate a list of these online communities, Instagram accounts, etc so we can share the new online directory when it's created?
- Amy: Are material exchanges they still operating? There is FreeCycle, but on the commercial end can this be promoted, could directory be created? Lack of space/warehousing for used goods is a barrier in Boston. It's hard to get stuff to move in real time; storage is needed. Can the state help overcome storage issue?
- Robin Ingenthron, RetroWorks: The general mining act of 1872 for extraction of natural resources; it's still on the books and is the biggest impediment we face in reuse and recycling. It creates an unlevel playing field because the federal govt subsidizes the extraction of virgin resources (trees, metal, oil, etc) and there are no subsidies for reuse and recycling.
- Harry Sanders, Newton Swap Whop: I'm a professional ebay seller; certain stuff that can be redistributed in Newton that costs nothing; for example, furniture and appliances that I leave curbside are taken very fast; there's a demand for usable used goods; also an opportunity for neighborhood flea markets. There are none inside the 495 belt. Newtons' affluent image means people come to newton to scavenge newton on trash day. It's an undermarket of commerce and a source of income for lower income people. How can DEP explore this and help support this informal network? How can we create more opportunities? How do we recognize the value of informal, neighbor to neighbor transactions?
- Peter Mui: Harry Sanders (tech entrepreneur) is addressing the symptom not the root cause. We need to stop the upstream flow, need to change consumer attitudes around consumption and not make it so easy to bring things into our lives.

### Next Steps & Announcements:

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- **Inspiration for Grassroots Action:** Erin wrapped the meeting up by reiterating the power of local action, grass roots initiatives; e.g. 130+ local single use plastic bag bans which created more traction and support for statewide legislation.
  - Peg Hall, Greening Greenfield: re 130 towns passing plastic bag bans, all on this call should note that if "Preemption" legislation passes, we lose that ability to pressure. We will look back on preemption laws like we now look at Citizen's United.
- **Advocacy Letter:** John Hite: CLF drafted letter to ask the Governor to lift reusable bag prohibition, reinstate deposit container redemption, lift suspension of local bag bans. Anyone who wants to sign on to the letter should contact John.

- **Repair Webinar Series:** Ray Pfau shared that Hudson Valley NY doing tutorials on how to fix certain items (i.e. how to fix a lamp or repair a bike innertube). Upcoming virtual repair events and this webinar series on repair can be found here: <http://www.boltonlocal.org/initiatives/repair-cafe>
- **Updated R&R Workgroup Contact List:** To join the R&R workgroup or update your information using this [form](#) or by emailing [erin.victor@mass.gov](mailto:erin.victor@mass.gov)
- **Accepting Reduce, Reuse, Repair Micro-Grants:** 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](mailto:erin.victor@mass.gov)

### Future Meeting Dates & Times:

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MassDEP recently received a request for evening R&R meeting times to accommodate individuals working during the day and unable to participate in the virtual calls. Erin posed the question to the group about whether people would be open to evening meetings to broaden our stakeholder participation? The results of where about 50/50 for participants in attendance regarding evening meetings:

2 of 2. Evening R&R workgroup meetings:

Multiple choice with multiple answers



### Next meeting:

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

**Date:** Wednesday, June 24 Time: 11AM - 1 PM

**Location:** Virtual, Register [Here](#).

### Upcoming Virtual Repair Events:

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**Virtual Fixit Clinic Sat May 30 2PM**

WHAT: Virtual (and Global!) Harvard University Cambridge MA

WHEN: Saturday May 30 2PM EDT <https://www.facebook.com/events/2971400592907295/>

**Virtual Repair Cafe Sat June 20 12PM**

[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>