

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

Wednesday, July 29, 2020 | 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Creating a Culture 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](mailto:erin.victor@mass.gov). A total of 51 people participated in the 7/29/2020 meeting. The discussion sections reflect both written and spoken comments and questions from participants.

## Meeting Discussion Topics

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

- R&R Workgroup Background
- Creating a Culture of Reuse in MA – what we've heard so far
- Roundtable Discussion: The barriers & strategies to promote a thriving culture of reuse in MA

## Summary of Discussion:

Erin reviewed the background and context for the R&R workgroup, the strategic planning process, the SWMP (public comment period open until September). See [slide deck](#) and [past meeting notes](#) for more information.

## Poll: How do you model a culture of reuse?



Summarized barriers to increasing culture of reuse based on prior R&R workgroup discussions:

- Consumers lack the knowledge, attitudes or behaviors that would support a greater cultural adoption of source 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

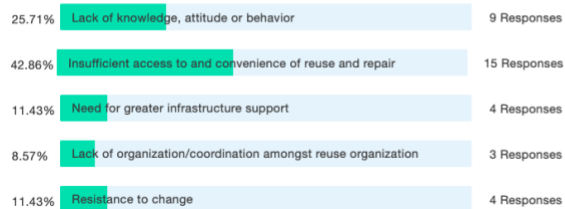
- Lack of organization and coordination amongst reuse organizations in Massachusetts
- Resistance to change: status quo interests oppose/resist initiatives to reducing, reusing and repairing consumer goods

## Poll: Which of these barriers to reuse do you think we should prioritize addressing with the R&R group?

2 of 2. Which of these barriers to reuse do you think we should prioritize addressing with the R&R group?

35 of 51 Attendees responded

Multiple choice with single answer



Erin asked the group if there are other barriers to reuse becoming more mainstream? What are we missing?

- Janice Parke, volunteer at Leicester recycling center: important barrier is space (outdoor or indoor) for reuse activities to happen. Places in a community where exchange of goods can take place - for drop-off, trade, pick up - there needs space infrastructure to support these activities.
  - This was echoed by Susan Waite, Northampton in the chat – that storage space for reuse is a large barrier
- Cynthia Arens, volunteer with Lexington Public Schools Green Teams: works with schools a lot; DEP grants to move schools to reusables in the cafeteria, but still some barriers. Reaction from school management, even with grants, is to push back, citing cost of maintaining reusables, operating the dishwasher. Is there anything more DEP could do to push schools and universities to do more reuse around food service ware? Glad that organics disposal ban is being lowered, but we need more support. Installation, labor costs could be covered?
- Gihan Hewage, Sustainability Manager at RTS; working with clients to reduce waste; we prioritize reduce/reuse. One of the barriers is attitude: not necessarily the inconvenience of reusing but the incredible convenience of disposable. Reframing the approach could help. My roommate loved throwing everything out b/c it was easier. If we make it harder to throw everything out, it might move people more towards reuse.
  - This was echoed in the chat, that as long as we think it's free to throw it away we're going to have waste
- Kirstie Pecci, Conservation Law Foundation: what we need to make this change is a level playing field with regulations that make it harder to throw things away. PAYT is one of those levers; pay more to throw away more. Honesty around recycling also key -- most of stuff we think is recyclable may not. EPR for packaging to make companies that produce single use products responsible for their disposal; this can push product

redesign to also the cost/benefit information is clear - share case studies on benefits of reuse. Summary: good regulations, good information.

- Maryam Kamangar: Director of Community Development for Goodwill Industries Berkshires and Southern Vermont. Other barriers for nonprofits are that donations of materials pay for payroll (our largest cost). Many times the metal containers (textile donation bins) are from out of state or for-profit orgs. The bags that you mail back with clothing are the same. It's expensive to purchase donation bins and buy a truck. Covid limits number of staff they can have at each location; we are paying to rent warehouse space to store donations for quarantining. Our barrier is a stronger funding source, infrastructure, trucks, to allow us to be in every community, make the convenience factor to donate/reuse greater; as opposed to the default of throwing it away.
- William Stanwood, Ashby: concerned with cultural changes necessary in product reuse. Planned obsolescence is deep in our culture. The buy, use, dispose mindset is so pervasive. We need to build a plan about the desirability of products that last a long time, even though we pay more for them. Our culture now promotes buy cheap, buy often, replace often. We need to convert, educate people about fundamentals -- the public doesn't understand what they don't know about recycling and reuse.
  - This was echoed in the chat: new is cheap, the consumer culture of single use is pervasive, and in some cases municipal board of health departments may be opposed to reusable containers (coffee cups, take out containers).
- Keith Gregory, Planet Aid: Planet Aid has experienced a skyrocketing cost of illegal dumping. A huge uptick in dumping at sites where our donation bins are located. Our trash has increased fourfold in the last 5 months (about 400% more trash than pre-covid). People are cleaning their houses, and dumping trash outside the donation bins, towns are asking them to remove bins. Keith has taken video, with license plates that he's sent to DEP; no results. He thinks it's not individuals, it's more clean out/junk removal businesses.
- Susan Waite, Northampton: too many people cleaning homes; we need to get the word out that charities are overwhelmed, need to flatten the curve on donations, help the public understand that the infrastructure is crippled during covid so holding on to donations is better for their community orgs and will insure reuse really happens.
- Peter Mui, Fixit Clinic: As things become more a merging of hardware and software things becoming obsolete because of the inability to upgrade software is becoming an issue. Example: 1) John Deere using the Digital Millennium Act to block end-user repair of their farm equipment 2) Apple iPhone diagnostics can tell if a device has been repaired by a third party.
- Peter Mui, Fixit Clinic: Our experience at Fixit Clinic is that there is a weak correlation between quality and price paid. The value of a second-hand item is linked to its provenance. The value of a donated item collapses once it leaves the original owner's garage. Some way for the original owner to document the disposition of the item (broken, and how broken), missing parts or all parts included etc.
- Morgan Laner, CET: Similar to "wishful recycling" there is a lot of "wishful donation". We need to develop guidance on the quality (and what types) of items reuse organizations would like to help avoid "wish-donating."

- Amy Goldberg: We need more communication and promotion around the cost savings and other benefits of reuse.

## Discussion: strategies to promote a culture of reuse

Erin outlined what ideas were identified to address the barriers raised in previous meetings. See [meeting slides](#) for full list of identified strategies. She then invited participants to identify which of these strategies seemed the most important to address with the R&R workgroup and raise any additional strategies not mentioned.

- Anna Moore, grad student:
  - I grew up in Northhampton and worked with the Northhampton ReUSE committee to create a reuse directory for Western Mass: [:https://whotakeswhat.wordpress.com](https://whotakeswhat.wordpress.com)
  - the state Reuse Directory wide web site would be wonderful. In addition to connecting people to where to donate and where to shop second hand. How can we make it more convenient to shop second hand? Not all consumers are patient; they want it now, new, don't want to wait for it to come to a second hand shop. Could there be a tool to search for items desired and see if they will be available locally?
  - Multiple people chimed in with different resources that allow for items to be inventoried and displayed online. See resource section for all links shared during the meeting.
- Janice Park: the page with poster (making lemonade out of lemons): can we share ideas about how to reuse stuff more widely available to orgs, companies that put out newsletters, land trusts -- things that people can share on FB, social media? Prepare ready-made info that others can share, promote. It's educational, it's motivating, it could be used by so many orgs. Keep passing it on "permission to repost".
- Janine Bishop, MassDEP: Question 1 on the November ballot has a negative campaign going that uses scare tactics to dissuade people from voting for it (criminals will steal code to allow them to break into your homes).
  - Susan Waite: Fear tactics are powerful (re: getting code to enter your home)
  - Ray Pfau: Automotive RTR passed in 2012. New law would cover electronic devices and would not just enable consumers to access info to repair their own items, but it would allow repair shops to have access to info to perform repairs.
- Bill Stanwood: are local board of health departments blocking efforts to allow reusables? He thinks Ashby's BOH would not try to block efforts to promote reuse. Recycle Smart has had an impact; it was promoted strongly b/c The Recycling Partnership came to MassDEP. We don't have a similar org for reuse. A Reuse Smart organization would help. If MassDEP can support development of campaign on reuse, that would be great. Hopefully DEP will invest in this, in the SWMP.
- Deb Beatty Mel: Boston Building Resources: wouldn't it be nice if we had a rating system for appliances on how long they are expected to last? Just like the Energy Star system.
  - Khrysti Barry, CET: Sticker on appliances: add info on how easy to repair which will affect the durability

- Irene, MassDEP MAC: Promotion at point of purchase on how to donate product for reuse or recycle after you are done using it.
- Cynthia Arens, LPS Green Teams: Social media/celebrity behind reuse; Make reuse cool; make single-use “uncool”
- Morgan Laner, CET: Develop guidance on the quality of items reuse organizations would like to help avoid “wish-donating” in the same way we are encouraging people to not “wishcycle”
- Marissa Perez-Dormitzer, Greater New Bedford Regional Refuse Management District: We need more incentives and support for businesses to get into this field. I would love to have a reusable take-out container program or reusable coffee cup program, but municipalities aren't going to wash the items. We would need to either incentivize a startup to provide the containers and wash them or encourage individual restaurants/coffee shops to provide reusables.
- Amy Goldberg: We need more communication and promotion around the cost savings and other benefits of reuse
  - This was echoed by Irene Congdon, MassDEP MAC
- Irene Congdon, MassDEP MAC: We need to connect with storage units, that they dedicate a unit for local charities
- Amy Goldberg: A library of things would could have a searchable online inventory
- Peter Mui: The City of Berkeley California just implemented a comprehensive restaurant and take-out reuse program this year: looking at what they did is a great place to start.
- Irene: reuse orgs could have a directory of what they stock like Devens that allows buyers to search based on what they are looking for and where to find it. Reuse in different settings such as home, school, work and on the go
- Peter Mui, Fixit Clinic: Can MassDEP spearhead a program mandating durability through institutional procurement processes, e.g. corporate, government, university RFPs and RFQs adding language along the lines of: “Preference will be given to vendors who provide service manuals, repair parts and diagnostic tools.” (Also creates local skilled and semi-skilled jobs.)?
- Peter Mui: there’s a perception that high price = quality. our work at fixit clinic debunks this. The \$8 toaster and the \$80 toaster have the same weak link. We’re in a race to the bottom. Where and how are the subcomponents that break constantly being made? Don’t use high price as a signal for high quality.
- Q: Paul Curry, Bay State Textiles: KISS - concerned that we’re all over the map; will MassDEP prioritize what we pursue first? Will we overwhelm the public with so many strategies?
 

A: Erin: at present, we’re in the "all ideas are good ideas". but we will prioritize, narrow the focus as we continue this planning process.
- Paul Curry: Low hanging fruit: lots of kids don’t have laptops at home: can DEP facilitate a way to get old, unwanted laptops with students who need them?
  - Peter Mui: Fixit clinic would be happy to set up refurbished laptops for students who need them
- Library of things could have searchable online inventory

Q: Karinne Vann: **What's the status of EPR laws in Massachusetts?**

A: Kirstie Pecci, Conservation Law Foundation: EPR law for packaging is not likely to move forward in this session. The bill would make the company that make the package or product responsible for managing it at end of life, either through a fee up front or a collective fund managed by a state agency or third party to reimburse munis for recycling/reuse. MassDEP doesn't have as many EPR laws as neighboring states such as: mattresses, paint, e-waste, expand the bottle deposit law, EPR for residential packaging (would help pay for municipal recycling programs). The problem is COVID threw everything in the air. There was good momentum pre-covid, it came out of committee. New legislative session starts Jan 2021. Also, we have a zero waste caucus in the legislature for the first time; priorities are expanded bottle bill, bans on single use plastics, PAYT mandated.

Q: **How can people weigh in on this topic?**

A: Kirstie Pecci, CLF: comment on SWMP (see information below). DEP doesn't pass laws but does implements them. Step 1: comment on the plan; Step 2: get in touch with your rep and senator and tell them you think EPR for packaging is important. Step 3) sign up for updates from CLF. Kirstie will share listserv (zero waste caucus) info with the group.

## Post-Meeting Survey: what was one strategy we discussed that you would like to see the MassDEP R&R Workgroup tackle?

At the end of the meeting, a post-meeting survey was displayed (and also included in a follow-up email) asking participants to identify one strategy we discussed that you would like to see the MassDEP R&R Workgroup tackle?

Here is a summary of what we heard, with the size of the word indicating the frequency in which the concept was mentioned among respondents:



## Announcements:

### 1) Solid Waste Master Plan re-opened for public comment

Every 10 years, Massachusetts prepares a new 10 year plan called the Solid Waste Master Plan. This plan establishes the framework, goals, future directions and strategies for solid waste management in Massachusetts over the next decade. MassDEP is seeking broad input from the public as we work towards finalizing this our Plan that will guide us from 2020 through 2030.

In addition to the information that we shared at the end of June, (which is included below for reference) MassDEP has prepared a summary presentation on the Draft 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan, which is available on this [page](#). Or to go directly to the presentation, you can use this [link](#). This presentation summarizes the goals, policy framework, and key strategies and programs of the Draft 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan.

Based on input received during its initial fall 2019 public comment period on the Draft 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan, as well as other developments, MassDEP has scheduled four more online public hearings on the document and will accept additional public comment through September 15, 2020. The re-opened public comment period will focus specifically, but not exclusively, on issues of environmental justice, climate change, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as they relate to solid waste management in Massachusetts.

For more information, please see <https://www.mass.gov/guides/solid-waste-master-plan>.

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**2) MA Reuse Directory:** we are starting to build the back end of an online directory using a platform called AirTable. If everyone on the call surveys their neighborhood to let us know about the outlets for sharing, repairing, lending, donating, -- we want to know about them. Please add this information to form [here](#).

**3) Reuse Networking:** How can folks connect with other people on these calls? Networking is a powerful way to grow our community. A [new workgroup contact directory](#) has been created. Use [this form](#) to add your name (or update your information) if you'd like to be included. You can also email Erin at [Erin.Victor@mass.gov](mailto:Erin.Victor@mass.gov).

### MA Reduce & Reuse Network (Email Listserv)

A listserv for anyone interested in source reduction and reuse regulations, policies, and programs in Massachusetts. Connect with other like-minded people from nonprofits, 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: [ReduceReuseNetworkMA+subscribe@googlegroups.com](mailto:ReduceReuseNetworkMA+subscribe@googlegroups.com)

Share by emailing: [reducereusenetworkma@googlegroups.com](mailto:reducereusenetworkma@googlegroups.com)

## Other Resources Shared by Participants

- [Who Takes What: A Directory for Reuse, Repair and Recycling in the Pioneer Valley](#)  
Resuable Cups: [www.usefull.us/](http://www.usefull.us/)
- Recording of. Newburyport's [Virtual Repair Café](#) - a tutorial on how to get your bike in good working order
- [STREETBANK.com](http://STREETBANK.com), a platform for sharing used items with your neighbors
- [myturn.com](http://myturn.com), Inventory Software that can be used for Tool Libraries and Library of Things
- On EPR Law:
  - Product Stewardship Institute: <https://www.productstewardship.us/>
  - National Stewardship Action Council: <https://www.nsaction.us/howweare>
  - MassPIRG: <https://masspirg.org/feature/map/zero-waste>
- The Massachusetts Zero Waste Caucus: <http://www.michelleciccolo.com/zero-waste-caucus.html>
- Related to laptops for kids: The Christina Foundation is a platform that helps facilitate the connection between a donor contributing equipment/electronics and recipient orgs (often nonprofits, but schools could potentially use) <https://www.cristina.org/what-we-do/technology-donation-platform/>
- Finding upcoming Virtual Repair Events:
  - [FixIt Clinic Facebook Page](#)
  - [Bolton Local Repair Café](#)