



Responsible Recycling Task Force Meeting #1

April 30, 2018 - 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

King Street Center 201 S. Jackson Street, Seattle, WA 98104

Members Present

April	Atwood	Seattle University, SWAC Vice Chair
Sabrina	Combs	City of Bothell
Tony	Donati	City of Kent
Jeff	Gaisford	KCSWD
Sego	Jackson	SPU
Phillipa	Kassover	City of Lake Forest Park, SWAC
Kevin	Kelly	Recology, SWAC Chair
Linda	Knight	City of Renton, MSWMAC Vice Chair
John	MacGillivray	City of Kirkland
Ken	Marshall	KC SWAC
Meg	Moorehead	KCSWD
Joan	Nelson	City of Auburn
Emily	Newcomer	Waste Management
Joyce	Nichols	City of Bellevue
Sarah	Ogier	City of Bellevue
Janet	Prichard	Republic Services
Stephanie	Schwenger	City of Bellevue
Lisa	Sepanski	KCSWD
Matt	Stern	Waste Management
David	Stitzhal	Full Circle Environmental
Penny	Sweet	City of Kirkland, MSWMAC Chair
Hans	VanDusen	SPU
Rob	VanOrsow	City of Federal Way

Agenda Item #1: Welcome & Introduction *(called to order by Jeff Gaisford at 9:01 am)*

Discussion:

- *Jeff Gaisford* introduces Colette Marien, who will take notes and will handle future task force correspondence, and David Stitzhal, who will facilitate the meeting.
- *David Stitzhal* reviews agenda items and notes that any items not discussed during the meeting will be added to a “parking lot” list and that all action items would be added to a to-do list.

Action Items: No action items



Agenda Item #2: Task Force Goals and Final Outcomes (*called to order by Jeff Gaisford at 9:07 am*)

Discussion:

- *Jeff Gaisford* shares the proposed primary and secondary goals of the task force, anticipated outcome of the task force meetings, and role of the task force:
 - **Primary:** To help identify near-, mid- and long-term actions in response to reduction in export markets for mixed recyclable materials due to China National Sword
 - **Secondary:** To help establish commitment across the region to responsible recycling and domestic sorting/processing of curbside recyclables
 - **Outcome:** Prepare a report with actionable items and recommendations for future action by all
 - **Role of Task Force:** Not to make decisions, rather to come up with recommendations that will go back to decision makers
- *Penny Sweet* asks if anyone from packaging industry will attend future meetings
- *Jeff Gaisford* responds that he's made a note to invite packaging representatives to one or more future meetings
- *David Stitzhal* leads discussion to gather feedback on task force goals and determine if there is agreement by the group
- Meeting attendees unanimously approve goals as written
- Meeting attendees discuss inclusion of the following into the goals:
 - *Penny Sweet:* Maintenance of consistency
 - *Matt Stern:* Keep focus of the goals narrow
 - *Stephanie Schwenger:* Focus on just a few of the banned materials, particularly paper.
 - *Phillipa Kassover:* Notes interest in having policy guidance and support for regulatory reform. Also interested in addressing plastics as well as paper.
 - *John MacGillivray:* Would like to ensure that enforcement/cart tagging is factored into the equation and that product stewardship is also considered
 - *Janet Prichard:* Notes desire to further define recyclable materials and align with Oregon state
 - *Jeff Gaisford* affirms that a role of the task force is to develop a process for what should and should not be in the bin
 - *Sarah Ogier and Penny Sweet:* Raises urgency of the situation and need to come up with solutions sooner
 - *Sabrina Combs:* Requests discussion surrounding what goes in the blue bin be moved up to June as annual communication to customers about what goes in the blue bin goes out in July

Action Items:

- Invite individuals from the packaging industry to future meetings
- Maintain consistency and focus on goals throughout meetings
- Prioritize focus on specific materials (including mixed paper and plastic)
- Provide guidance for regulatory reforms
- Prioritize near-term actions before medium and long-term
- Adjust meeting schedule to move blue bin conversation to June meeting



Agenda Item #3: Responsible Recycling (*Lisa Sepanski calls to order at 9:23 am*)

Presentation: *Lisa Sepanski* presents on how we are defining responsible recycling for the purpose of this task force. The following highlights her presentation:

- Quality vs. quantity
 - Prioritize materials that are valuable and have stable markets
 - Maintain integrity of valued materials
 - Work with haulers to ensure materials can be sorted effectively
 - Aim for market ready bales vs. mixed bales
 - *Using a mini mixed paper bale for demonstration, Lisa shows how flat plastic can get mixed into paper bales and notes the issue that wet paper in a bale can cause to the MRF process*
- Regional policy alignment
 - Notes importance of regional policy consistency
 - Recycling is a system that will benefit from regional coordination
 - Helps to optimize sorting and processing
 - Maximizes marketability
- Harmonized messaging
 - Importance of utilizing consistent messaging to the public
 - Suggests promoting one basic priority list of materials that don't contaminate to the public
 - Notes importance of communication to letting our elected officials and policy makers know about the importance of responsible recycling
- Domestic processing and markets
 - Processing that allows us to document what gets sent to market
 - Glass example:
 - Bin → MRF → secondary processing facility, strategic materials (secondary facility sorts glass pieces by color) → final manual sort → material sent to end market next door where it is made into wine and beer bottles that are refilled locally
 - Great example of the market and industry responding to a commingled issue locally
- Recycling is not free
 - Costs money to gain environmental benefits of recycling
 - There are many funding mechanisms that can be employed to support responsible recycling
- Measuring real recycling
 - Measuring real recycling is measuring what gets sent to end markets, not what gets put in the bin
 - Domestic processing into market ready bales

Discussion:

- *Linda Knight:* Notes that curbside collection system is missing from the responsible recycling conversation.
- *Phillipa Kassover:* Notes multifamily homes and commercial collection causes most contamination issues. Raises question of whether a solution could include an alternate collection system for multifamily homes.



- *John MacGillivray*: Notes the need for cities to be committed to enforcing hauler sorting and contamination rules and calls for a regional commitment to work with haulers to better tag contamination in the bin.
- *Ken Marshall*: Notes that single stream collection makes it difficult for haulers who utilize automatic collection to recognize contamination.
- *Matt Stern*: Raises Oregon's dual sort collection (paper collected one week, containers the next) as a possible solution locally.
- *Joan Nelson*: In response to Ken Marshall, notes that their haulers utilize a three-strike tagging system for contamination, with the first tag noting the contamination and flagging haulers to check for contamination on subsequent pickups. If contamination remains after a third check the haulers will not pick up the load.
- *April Atwood*: Notes need to take a long-term view at value and stable markets, using glass as an example of how end markets and commodity value can shift.

Action Items:

- Include the following curbside topics in the definition of responsible recycling, specifically:
 - Curbside messaging
 - Collection operations and need to improve material collection at the curb
 - Commitment to enforcement
- Explore better collection methods for multifamily and commercial units
- Explore revisions to municipal contracts with haulers

Agenda Item #4: Current Conditions in King County (*called to order by Sego Jackson at 9:44 am*)

Discussion:

- *Sego Jackson* recaps the January 30, 2018 *Domestic Processing of Mixed Plastics* meeting:
 - **Purpose:** Looked at the potential to sort 3-7 plastics domestically
 - **Attendees:** Included local government, MRF representatives from Recology, Waste Management, Republic Services and Emterra (from British Columbia), Department of Commerce, Ecology, and Oregon DEQ observers, among others
 - **Take-aways:**
 - US MRFs predominantly sent bales to China and are now sending majority to alternative markets in SE Asia
 - Emterra Group: Different than US MRFs, plastics are sorted by resin type and processed, sorted, sold domestically
 - Merlin Plastics in Canada has capacity for sorting Seattle's plastics. Costs include a charge for further sorting at Merlin and payment back to sources
 - Secondary MRFs operate differently than PRFs in that they are a separate facility that takes unsortable residuals from primary MRFs
 - The meeting resulted in exploration of what the role of a secondary MRF could possibly be in the Seattle area



- MRFs speak about current state of affairs:
 - **Waste Management (Matt Stern):**
 - WM has found alternate markets for mixed paper but notes that the long-term stability and consistency of those markets is not certain.
 - WM sends plastics to alternate markets in Asia.
 - Notes desire for the plastics industry to identify what materials are needed so that MRFs can match those materials with their processing strategies.
 - **Republic Services (Janet Prichard):**
 - Notes fragility of current practices – ships are now taking empty containers back to China whereas these containers used to be filled with bales
 - Notes that they are selling a lot of paper but that it is still not enough and that often times paper bales are wet, leaving them to lose commodity status
 - Notes that glass is a great example of local processing in Seattle, but that it would not be a good solution if we were to haul to BC due to the carbon footprint of transportation
 - **Recology (Kevin Kelly):**
 - Recology has found alternative markets for paper
 - Transportation is also an issue for Recology
 - Notes that the supply chain issues that shipping to India instead of China has caused
 - At current, Recology has more orders than they do bookings
- *David Stitzhal* asks the MRF representatives to speak on short and long-term plans for improvement:
 - On the short term, **Republic Services** has invested 1 million dollars of equipment into facilities to further sort clean paper and is partnering with cities to see cleaner bales. Janet notes shipping as the biggest long-term issue that they face.
 - **Recology** continues to communicate the words empty, clean and dry to their customers in order to reduce contamination in the short-term and stresses the importance of keeping lids closed
 - **Waste Management** in the short term is looking at developing additional sorting capabilities and addressing municipal contract language to determine what would happen in the event of failure. In the medium term, Waste Management is looking at program design and developing criteria for how and why materials are included in their program.
- *Stephanie Schwenger* asks the processors to speak to domestic markets:
 - **Waste Management** highlights:
 - Lack of paper mills West of the Mississippi
 - Economic cost to move material from Portland to Seattle is greater than from Seattle to China
 - Waste Management is looking at domestic mill options
 - Notes low percentage of newspaper in NW bales as an additional issue with domestic processing
 - Waste Management recommended to the WTO that they should consider a recyclables certification program



- **Republic Services** highlights:
 - Need for contract and material flexibility
- *Sego Jackson* asks processors to talk about mixed paper sorting and poly-coated paper. The processors identify the following topics:
 - **Waste Management** notes the issue that milk cartons can be identified as a 2D or 3D material leads to bale contamination
 - **Recology, Republic and Waste Management** all agree that the less than .5% contamination policy that China holds is difficult to achieve
 - **Waste Management, Republic and Recology** all note the difficulty in separating brown and white paper materials
- *Lisa Sepanski* asks if new equipment addresses carton and poly coated material separation, to which the MRFs reply that they do not.
 - *Janet Prichard* stresses the need to get back to the basics and focus on quality materials, while maintaining flexibility surrounding what should go in the bin
 - *Matt Stern* affirms Janet's point with mention of one city in Oregon's dual stream collection and how that would allow materials to go directly to the part of the MRF where they can be separated
 - *Kevin Kelly* points out that there will be some difference between Washington and Oregon, citing the example of how Oregon has a bottle bill whereas California has a bottle CRV
- *Hans VanDusen* asks if there is any visibility into what certain countries do with our mixed paper and plastics
 - **Recology and Waste Management** both affirm that bales are inspected before they are shipped, therefore if they are shipped, it means the materials are usable
- *Matt Stern* mentions the certification plan that WM proposed to the Chinese government, asking them to certify MRFs as putting out clean materials, also noting that nothing has yet come from the request
- *Sabrina Combs* speaks on the need to communicate all of these details to the public. She notes that the public is not aware of any of these concerns and that many people have begun to give up on recycling. Sabrina suggests that if we go back to the basics, we need to be in agreement across the region on what that means and need to have consistent messaging.
- *Ken Marshall* mentions that China is building processing plants in Alabama and Ohio and raises question as to whether these will be used to clean and sort our materials
- *Sego Jackson* asks what is needed in order for products to be better cleaned domestically
 - *Matt Stern* responds that the industry needs a hard reset at every level in order to move us into the future
- *Joyce Nichols* highlights the importance of having enough information to develop and share a story with residents and council members that is consistent and which highlights this is a tangible issue to those not as involved



- *Phillipa Kassover* affirms *Joyce's* comment, noting that consumers are confused, and also raises the question of looking upstream at packaging companies
 - **Republic Services and Waste Management** affirm that they are in conversations with the packaging industry but don't believe that plastics or packaging industries will be helpful in the short or long-term future.
- To conclude, *Sego Jackson* highlights the need for product stewardship and producer responsibility if we want to get the packaging industry to cooperate

Action Items:

- Send the summary from the January 30 *Domestic Processing of Mixed Plastics* meeting to task force members

Parking Lot Items:

- Explore Extended Producer Responsibility programs
- Explore a certification program for MRFs sending materials to export

Agenda Item #5: Communication Updates (*called to order by Jeff Gaisford at 10:48 am*)

Discussion:

- *Jeff Gaisford* asks the room if they'd like a communications team to develop a toolkit and campaign for communication with the public
 - The room affirms but requests to be included in/review message development
- *Joyce Nichols* identifies the need for a story that tells the public:
 - What goes in the bin
 - How did we get to where we are today?
 - What is the history of our situation with China today?
 - Recycling is not free
 - Messaging surrounding the changing and flexible nature of recycling at current
- *Sego Jackson* highlights need to define all words communicated to ensure everyone is in full understanding
- *Ken Marshall* notes need for messaging to be consistent and achievable from the haulers perspective as well

Action Items:

- Develop a communication toolkit that:
 - Is consistent
 - Tells the public a story about the current state of recycling
 - Messages what can and cannot go in the blue bin and stresses the changing nature of this at current
 - Speaks to both the public and to haulers



Agenda Item #6: Task Force Meeting Schedule and Proposed Topics (*called to order by David Stitzhal at 10:56 am*)

- *David Stitzhal* thanks the room for their time and asks attendees to send additional comments on the meeting schedule and topics to Colette Marien

Action Items:

- The task force facilitation team will adjust the meeting schedule based on attendee feedback, as well as to move the blue bin discussion up to June
- Alternate meeting rooms will be explored as needed