

Draft SWAAC Meeting Minutes
Albemarle County Solid Waste Alternatives Advisory Committee
May 12, 2022

Attendance:

SWAAC: Christine Hirsh-Putnam, Ann Johnson, Jesse Warren, Betsey Soulsby, Teri Kent, Navarre Bartz, Monty Harris, Sage Bradburn, Peggy Gilges, Margaret Eldridge
Liaisons: Donna Price, Jim Andrews, Lance Stewart, Elizabeth Jones, Isabella O'Brien, Phil McKalips
SWAAC members absent: Victoria Walsh

Action items

- Christine and Jesse still plan to talk to Jay Zook about plastic and glass messaging.
- Lance, Peggy and Christine will meet about hauler requirements.
- Christine and Monty will discuss action steps on school composting
- Ann will meet with Monty about grant opportunities
- Peggy will send Phil language for the RSWA website on compostable containers
- Ann will send a link to the PWPAC May minutes
- Ann will look for waste characterization studies she shared a couple years ago and will send them to EJ

Old Business and Announcements

- Guest introduction: Will Tucker, UVA Global Sustainability student who has experience working with Professor Spencer Phillips on ecosystem service valuation. He is interested in doing a cost benefit analysis comparing artificial and natural turf playing fields. He joined the meeting to learn more about SWAAC. He is open to suggestions and to digging deeper into questions that the committee might have on this topic.
- Agenda for May meeting approved.
- April Minutes approved.
- Most of the recycling FAQs are now on the RSWA website. The information about how to report litter and illegal dumping does not appear on the County or RSWA website. Peggy wrote guidance for this and it was agreed that this information needs to be available to the public. Lance agreed to look into this.
- Peggy suggested that compostable foodware be added to the items that can be composted at MRC and Ivy MUC. Phil has some concerns that this might lead to contamination due to confusion around #7 plastics. Panorama Paydirt has not voiced any concerns about contamination. Margaret commented that during her most recent visit to the Black Bear facility, Eric said that he is happy to get the compostable foodware because it provides a needed carbon source. Peggy offered to send Phil some language about the acceptance of compostable foodware and Phil agreed to add it to the website. If contamination becomes a problem then the issue can be revisited.
- Christine and Jesse have not yet reached out to Jay Zook, but plan to do so.
- Peggy, Christine, Lance and EJ will be meeting to discuss the hauler requirements

- EJ plans to meet with the GBB on May 18th to see what their experience is with a waste characterization study. If anyone has questions they would like EJ to ask, please send those to her. Ann commented that she had sent some examples of waste characterization studies a couple years ago. She agreed to look for those studies and send them to EJ. Ann reported from the most recent Virginia Recycling Association (VRA) meeting that the DEQ has recognized the very poor level of recycling data in Virginia and the need for improvement. Chesapeake, the third largest city in Virginia, is considering the suspension of curbside recycling which is served by MRF that is 17 years old and in need of upgrades. Ann said there was much discussion at VRA about needed investment in infrastructure and a MRF to serve Central Virginia. Ann commented in response to Monty's question about the cost of providing curbside pickup. Recycling services are one of the cheapest services a municipality can provide their citizens. South Carolina recently received \$544 million worth of capital investment for businesses looking for recyclable materials. This is direct investment from recycling companies because companies like Volvo and BMW, and fiber producers are looking to produce products with post consumer recycled content. Ann reminded members that 25% of waste is imported from out of state. The average tipping fee in VA is \$35 and there is no surcharge for out of state waste. Applying a surcharge would generate needed revenue to support recycling efforts.
- Plastic bag tax update. This is in the County's 2023 budget and will go into effect on January 1st, 2023. It is still unclear if the City will take action on implementing the tax this year. Lance had a conversation with a City public works staff member, but does not know that there has been much discussion by the City Council.
- Artificial turf update. The BOS did not approve funding for the installation of artificial turf playing fields. Peggy recognized the time and effort put into the artificial turf decision by the BOS and staff. She hoped that the SWAAC letter was helpful and informative. There are still questions about the artificial turf replacement at Monticello and other County highschools. The SWAAC has an interest in seeing that this material is properly disposed of and the need to reduce the environmental impact of the replacement material including the consideration of Cradle to Cradle certification. Lance described what he knows about how decisions will be made concerning the school fields. It is most likely that staff will use a design build company. Lance shared information with the School Director of Building Services including cost estimates and materials like BrockFill. Peggy reiterated the need to make sure materials are disposed of properly and the environmental impact be thoroughly considered. Sage expressed a wish to see an itemized breakdown of costs to install, maintain and dispose of artificial turf to help guide future expenditures. Peggy reported the EPR legislation in NY State that required manufactures to take back carpeting including artificial turf.

County report on litter pick-up events

- EJ reported on the final event of the litter pilot program that included five schools over three days to pick up over 1000 gallons of trash on school campuses. Students submitted questions for the staff to answer. There was a live broadcast on campus, in

person Q&A sessions, and a recycling relay. The teachers are on board to do this again and EJ is looking forward to planning for next year.

Planning and Vision Group

- Peggy and Navarre met and discussed ways to reduce construction debris.
- Isabella said construction and demolition debris falls under industrial waste so data is not collected for the solid waste and recycling report. Van der Linde is working with computer scientists to develop a system to determine where the waste is coming from. This will be helpful because now the TJ SWPU is not able to collect information from companies like County Waste who do not keep separate records for those municipalities within and outside the solid waste planning unit. DEQ's preliminary recycling rate for 2021 our planning unit is 39%, down slightly from 2020 and up from 2019. The TJ SWPU report from the last several years can be found [here](#).
- General Assembly update: Although Governor Youngkin reversed EO 77, UVA plans to continue their efforts to reduce single use plastics.

Operations Group

- There is still a need for someone to lead this group.
- Glass recycling update: Friends of Nelson are reviewing the materials and everything is teed up for the grant.
- Jesse plans to meet individually with group members to keep things moving.
- Monty wants to see action with the school composting and is eager to move on this.

Outreach and Education Group

- Christine thanked Betsey for her steadfast commitment as a Recycling Ambassador at MRC. The Sierra Club recognized this effort with the Earth Flag award. The new staff at MRC are helpful and on board.
- The County's [Environmental Stewardship Hub](#) is up and running. Check out the Reduce, Reuse and Recycle information.
- HOA outreach work is ongoing.
- Christine reported on her experience during the litter event running the recycling relay and the need for more environmental literacy related to waste reduction.
- Next meeting will be held at Wegman's 5/26 at 5 pm.

New Business

- SWAAC report to the Board due in July
- Ann sent information about [CellBlock](#), a company that collects batteries. This is important because batteries contain valuable metals and they are a fire hazard. Phil expressed concern about storage, cost and moving this material around at the satellite sites. Ann suggested that it would be worth calling the company to get more information.
- Isabella shared information about funding available for recycling and waste management through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. See more information about the EPA

Recycling and Outreach program [here](#). There is also funding for the EPA to establish best practices for [battery recycling](#). Ann asked if the County has the capability to apply for grants as there will be a lot of opportunities. Lance said there is a dedicated team to follow the grant opportunities. A process is in place to make sure there is a balanced consideration of administrative burden. Ann will ask Monty to join her in looking at significant grant opportunities to cover recycling infrastructure needs and asked that Phil help by providing a list of priority needs. Isabella will pass along additional information when it comes to her attention.

- The Plastic Waste Prevention Advisory Council will be meeting in Charlottesville on May 19th. The pre-recorded presentations will include the South Carolina Department of Commerce on Economic Development and Recycling, North Carolina Dept of Natural Resources and the Recycling Grants Program, Bryce Hesterman on NextCycle - catalytic incubation to driving the circular economy within a state. There will also be an in person presentation from Tamsin Etefagh who started and operated one of the first mechanical reclamation businesses for food grade polypropylene for 30 years and is now the CSO of PureCycle. A link to the recorded presentations will be sent to the SWAAC once they are available.
- Peggy mentioned a [Washington Post article](#) that reported a dip in plastic recycling rates to below 6%.
- Ann mentioned the [Ca AG suit against Exxon Mobil](#) for allegedly overstating the role of recycling as a solution to plastic waste. Ann is working on a systems analysis of PET and polyester products to see how much is used, how much is recovered and how much is lost, and where greenhouse gasses are being emitted along the way. Curbside recycling is an inefficient solution because there is so much more material embedded in the products we use above and beyond plastic food containers.
- Ann has invited two new potential SWAAC members who are highly qualified and have expressed interest in joining.

Meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Next SWAAC meeting will be held Thursday, June 9.