



Boston Zero Waste Advisory Committee

Notes of July 16, 2018 Meeting

(these notes reflect issues raised by the ZWAC and public during the meeting. All materials from ZWAC meetings, including agendas, slides, handouts and video, are on the City's website- <https://www.boston.gov/departments/environment/zero-waste-boston>)

Community Engagement

- People at community meetings are generally supportive of Zero Waste planning. Food waste and plastic bags often come up as issues.
- People don't have a great grasp of what Zero Waste Plan will mean to them.
- Public comments are being tracked and will be responded to.
- ZWAC members should continue to talk about the project to constituents.

Economic Development

- Two examples of zoning as an issue: metal scrap companies on the harbor are being threatened by development; in Readville, the Zoning Board of Appeals is approving the rezoning of land zoned for light industrial as housing.
- Could the City attract plastics recycling companies? Response: Not aware of any currently interested; could be handled through a grants program or outreach to some companies from China looking to site in the US.
- An example of an initiative the City is taking to utilize scrap glass is a test project for sidewalk repair.
- Are there legislative policies to encourage minimum recycled content in products? Response: this could be part of an environmental purchasing program.
- Developing markets in Boston is an important contribution the City can make nationally. China, a major market, may be stopping imports of all recyclables by 2020. Boston is the first major city in the US developing a Zero Waste Plan in context of this new market reality.

Zero Waste Plan Elements

- Include in plan that everyone can take action – organizations and individuals.
- Provide key takeaways: what's changing, what do I need to know, what do I need to do. Short and one page- what are the new rules and policies. This will be different for everyone.
- Have more than one one-pager; need teasers for each section.
- Will the Plan include the importance of using contracts to address the issue of living wage? Response: The City's Zero Waste Guiding Principles and Evaluation Criteria are where this is addressed.
- Markets: Is there any consideration of going back to dual stream, given contamination problems of single stream? Could glass or another material be separated out? The City could partner with

the private sector/industry on markets. Response: processors can clean single stream materials to higher standards. It's up to cities to set the standards by which the contractors operate and hold them to it. Programs need to be designed around available markets.

- Commercial businesses are not finding single stream as efficient as it used to be, creates opportunities for pilots for different collection methods.
- Do job creation estimates include jobs in buildings that would support Zero Waste? No, not included.
- What are SMART rates? Response: could be a base that is covered by property taxes, as there is now, but anything above that base would be charged an extra fee; it would provide an incentive to reduce waste.
- There is an estimated additional \$5/household and business/month for all of the new services, but people could save money if you take waste reduction seriously.
- The costs and benefits of each initiative are counted individually, but they are all dependent on each other to get the estimated results.
- The estimated emissions reductions are based on diverting materials from disposal.

Residential Subgroup Breakout:

- Are there sources of funding to help fund the program? Response: DEP, enforcement fees, permit fees.
- What does SMART mean? Response: moving from a tax to a fee-for service, cart-based system. If there is a baseline of services covered by property taxes, the SMART part could refer to new fees above that.
- SMART is a good idea, but could lead to increased contamination of recyclables.
- Implementation options include a full rollout of services all at once- "ripping off the band aid" vs. a gradual implementation.
- Equity: What does equitable mean? This system may not necessarily be more equitable, but it could be. Intentional engagement is needed early on with the environmental justice communities. There should be a safety net so people aren't hurt by the new system. Low waste generators should understand they now pay to subsidize big generators. The EJ community is not opposed to Zero Waste, but they need to get information about costs and how they can save. Outreach and education are key before anything is implemented. Who generates the most waste and where does it come from? What is the best way to present programs? EJ considerations should also keep in mind the communities that trash and recycling are going to. Subsidies for low and fixed-income residents.
- Zero Waste may cost more now, but not making changes is also expensive. Dealing with contamination of recyclables- through education, enforcement or payments to processors- will be costs that will be incurred even without moving to Zero Waste system.
- Need to size trash carts right to see benefits of reduction—if carts are too big, won't see trash reduced. But also don't want to create more contamination from trash overflow into recycling bins.
- Boston Housing Authority houses 10-12K families in the City. It's important to think about large multifamily and how to manage the system. Culturally relevant education is needed, as well as constant education and 1:1 meetings. Strong resident involvement is also needed. As part of

Integrated Pest Management Contract, BHA requires contractor to work with a BHA liaison in each building; this could be a model.

- The recycling rate shouldn't be what's at the curb, but what leaves the MRF. Part of good data and metrics is understanding what's at curb and what's taken out at MRF (materials recovery facility).
- How can we build on the excitement and motivation that's already in the City? Many people are excited about Zero Waste but don't have the information to do it correctly. Work bottom up as well as top down. Consider community-scale solutions, such as composting on local farms. Go where you are wanted first- engage communities that want to have programs, first.
- In Readville, residents want to keep light industrial zoning but the Zoning Board of Appeal keeps approving large apartments. Area has rail yards that would be helpful for shipping materials in and out.
- Codman Square CDC EcoCenter can support economic development efforts.
- In thinking about public education, many seniors won't use a website or apps. Also think about education in schools, and using neighborhood watch groups. Information should be simple- don't throw out X, Y, or Z.
- Educate people first before limiting what people can throw out and see if it makes a change. When trash carts come in, don't charge people at first. Instead collect information and use that to educate people. Come once/year to each neighborhood and report back. Move gradually. Don't do every other week trash collection.
- What would SMART look like for renters, homeowners, multi- and single-family homes? How would potential phased-in implementation impact different stakeholders? What would it mean if the City no longer offered services to non-compliant large apartment buildings? Need a neighborhood by neighborhood approach.
- The Plan is looking at diversion around tonnage. It should consider toxicity as well. Organics shouldn't be composted with sludge; environmental and health costs to communities around disposal facilities are externalized costs.
- Look at multiple solutions/collection methods, e.g., collect organics in bags.
- The bid for the new contract goes out at the end of this year, the City can only do now what it can do quickly. The duration will be 5 years.
- There are lots of details and specifics that need to be worked out. Without the education and market and business model wrapped around the programs, we won't achieve our goals.

Industrial, Commercial, Institutional Breakout

- City should set zero waste goals and standards for ICI sector, and let them customize their own solutions.
- Come up with a system that will work for businesses in terms of cost, process, and workflow.
- Include incentives and data reporting.
- Provide opportunity for businesses to participate in programs; many already are.
- The City's BERDO (Building, Energy, Reporting, Disclosure Ordinance) could be expanded to include reporting on waste and waste reduction.
- More source separation (vs single stream) recycling could work for businesses: paper/cardboard, plastic/metal/glass, compost, and trash.

- Challenges include generator education, multiple languages, multiple businesses, costs, contamination as well as increased quality standards, and pushback from haulers.
- Solutions include limiting certain plastics (through ordinance), improving MRF operations, better standards and benchmarks.
- Implement penalties for contamination.
- Set up program over several years (e.g., year 1 focus on collecting data, year 3 developing aspirational targets).
- The system should work for all kinds of businesses and be scalable.
- Hauler routes should be more efficient and economically viable.
- Bans and mandates may work well for e-waste.
- Single –use bans, e.g. on straws.
- Resources to help roll out this plan can include the Mass Department of Environmental Protection and the Center for EcoTechnology.
- Can piggy-back programs to City’s Green and Clean Business certification.
- Set goals and let business figure out how to achieve.

Discussion

- Look to programs that bridge sectors.
- How is equity defined? Who can afford to pay vs paying for only what you generate (vs subsidizing wasteful practices of others).
- Highlight that people are already paying for trash. What will it cost if we don’t move to Zero Waste?
- What happens when report done? Recommendations will be provide to the mayor. This will be a high level plan. Once the Mayor approves, details of implementation will be developed. Many departments will be involved in implementation.
- Would be good to have ongoing role for ZWAC.

Next Steps

- Finalize report and public education case studies.
- Next ZWAC meeting in the Fall.
- Send comments on handouts or anything else to Susan Cascino, Susan.Cascino@boston.gov