

Regional Composting Working Group Minutes

March 1, 2021 2 pm

I. Call to Order 2:05 pm

Members present: Maggie Morrison (ORCSD), Jen Andrews (UNH Sustainability Institute), Nell Neal (Durham Integrated Waste Management Advisory Committee), Mary Caulfield (Durham Integrated Waste Management Advisory Committee), Dean Rubine (Lee Sustainability Advisory Committee), Chuck Cox (Lee Sustainability Advisory Committee)

Members absent: N/A

Public Present: Paul Gasowski (Lee Sustainability Advisory Committee)

II. Approval of minutes from February 9, 2021

Maggie: Everything will be publicly posted through the town of Lee, which is enough to avoid Right To Know issues.

Dean: I will send approved minutes to Denise Duval, Lee Town Secretary.

Maggie: I have some changes.

Jenn: I changed some wording.

Minor corrections.

Minutes approved 6-0 by roll call vote as amended.

III. Updates

Mary: I can discuss with the Rotary on March 7 what we're doing and find out if they're interested. Is the question about putting a national grant together?

Jenn: They weren't aware of grants; I wrote back to the chair; let's talk. Sounds like there's confusion about the grant.

Maggie: Back to square one; tell them this group has been formed, we're still defining our scope; we're exploring the concept of regional compost for the school, university and three towns.

Jenn: I'm going to share the email from Phil to include in the minutes. It's the Durham Great Bay Rotary. [emails appended below]

Mary: How can they be helpful to us?

Jenn: Let's explore if we can be helpful with each other.

Maggie: They're in our hip pocket for when we want to reach out to business. We're building our resource pool.

Mary: I wasn't really sure what we're looking for; I'm better now.

Jenn: Maybe it's just some brainstorming.

Nell: I forward an email from Alaina Rogers, Strafford Regional Planning Group. [Email appended below] She's enthusiastic. They had some recycling roundtables a while back which found towns didn't know what other towns were doing. They created a GIS story map process of collecting data about Waste Management in towns of Strafford County. They hope to use the data to facilitate towns working together; it's expected out soon.

Dean: GIS is a Geographic Information System, tying data to points on a map.

Nell: They're applying for USDA application grant, deadline October, to get help make the GIS story map. Whatever we work out could be useful to them. She also wants to come to our meetings; Maggie please put her on the list to get our agenda.

Maggie: For now, the members making contact are the liaisons to the respective group. You're responsible for keeping the dialog going.

Jenn: Strafford is a great partner.

Maggie: I think it's premature for them to attend meetings.

Dean: It's a posted public meeting, if they want to come they're welcome.

Maggie: Make sure everybody knows it will be publicly posted, with posted minutes.

Jenn: We have to manage expectations.

Nell: They asked me when we planned to do things; I said we didn't have those answers yet. We're figuring that out. They were fine with that.

Chuck: I talked to Madbury Town Administrator Eric Feigenbaum. He agreed it was a good idea to have Madbury in the Working Group. I still haven't heard back from him with the appointment. I talked to Peachtree farms; they're supportive. I'll follow up with Eric Feigenbaum.

Chuck: Re: the book Community Scale Composting Systems. Lee Library just got a copy, I borrowed it from Nottingham, via interlibrary loan. Dean and Nell have copies. We should start with the introduction and first chapter. Intro: Recycling Organics at the Community Scale and Chapter 1. Common Models of Community Scale Composting. They give a broad look at our options; next chapters follow up with detail.

Maggie: Looks like a good resource.

Chuck: I talked to Scooby Doo Farm. They volunteered some land for a composting site, if we don't think we can do it at a transfer station site. They have a tractor and loader.

Maggie: Will there be an UNH student to join us?

Jenn: Some prospects, nothing definite yet.

Welcome Paul Gasowski, joined Zoom.

Jenn: Update on the UNH side. Spoke with Tom Kelly and assistant director Wilson. They agree it's vital and that UNH is supported. They reiterated the concerns about COLSA (College of Life Science and Agriculture), dining facilities, everybody working so hard to get through the semester, orange mode, back and forth from pandemic, early retirement.

COLSA should be part of the conversation at some point; probably the summer when they can give some meaningful time.

The second piece: I have one student with a couple hours of week, another looking for a research program over the summer, through the Hamel Scholars program. I could be the faculty mentor; I would supervise.

One other thing, I'm slated to meet with Eric Meyer, Director of Organics Manages for Waste Management Inc. He suggested we get clarity around what are the goals of the group. One of the responses for UNH is: students really want it, isn't it obvious it's the right thing to do? Let's try to get some clarity around the goals for UNH and Oyster River.

Dean: The Lee selector board was supportive, but they insist the Right To Know concerns be addressed.

Dean: Jen Messeder told us a story whose takeaway for us was: Try to get the person who hates regional composting the most on the committee so by the time we have a plan to run up the flagpoles all possible objections have been addressed.

Mary: They'd be opposing nature.

Chuck: Some states, town in Mass, mandates composting. The movement is there; we have to work out the practicalities.

Mary: I read about that in Vermont.

Dean: The restaurants are mandated to keep food waste out of the landfill stream in Massachusetts.

Maggie: Mike Nork (NHDES) told us part of the stumbling block is NH doesn't have the statutory structure to make it happen.

Dean: Mike Nork thought we could make it work.

Mary: What is GHG?

Jenn: Greenhouse Gases. That's my background, what I do at UNH, reduce carbon, nitrogen footprints, working with towns. They're coming at it from that perspective.

Chuck: Farms don't want to reduce nitrogen.

Jenn: I mean reduce nitrogen pollution.

IV. Agree to final version of timeline

Maggie: Thank you Jen for the draft timeline. The timeline seems pretty solid; if we find some additional row to enter we'll add it. We're pioneers here in NH. NH has its unique way of looking at regional issues.

Question: What's a prezi?

Jenn: Prezi is short for presentations, from experts or partners.

Jenn: This item says "make recommendations." I just want to say I'm unclear about what we're making recommendations about. We need to clarify our needs/goals/priorities.

Maggie: We'll do our research, part of it includes clarifying what those are.

The working group decided to vote to approve this Draft Process document.

Roll call vote. Approved 6-0.

V. Defining our vision

Maggie: Because we just did (Oyster River) our first greenhouse inventory report, there's a clear dotted line that the greenhouse gas inventory report is connected to this regional waste initiative and to education. From the Oyster River point of view our priorities are education and reducing carbon.

Jenn: Is it reducing the food waste by generating less or reducing the amount thrown away? By "reduce food waste" do you mean not buying or preparing food that won't get eaten, or not sending food waste to the landfill?

Maggie: The data we have is about the food that doesn't get eaten. We do have data on food purchases but not about the amount of food that comes in from home through school lunches. We only measure the food that gets through out by faculty, staff and students and through the cafeteria. Oyster River has some more work to do to get a broad scope of the food waste we have.

Mary: Did students explore things they put back in their lunchbox. What about food discarded at home?

Maggie: Our survey didn't go that deep, there's more to unpack, different grade levels, lots to do. Food is not getting disposed of correctly. A lot of our food waste is being thrown out incorrectly.

Dean: We found out Monday Lee got their Mr. Fox cost down below their MSW disposal cost. By filling 60 gallon food waste bins to 400 pounds, for which Mr. Fox charges \$14 to pick up, they got their compost costs to \$70 per ton. Lee's priorities: reduce cost, meet constituent demand, help the environment.

Jenn: UNH's priority is education. We don't really want to reduce greenhouse gases from the landfill; that landfill gas helps our organic footprint. I'm pretty sure it's cheaper for UNH to send things to the landfill than compost. UNH priorities are education first, reduce nutrient pollution next, then reduce cost.

Maggie: Oyster River's priority is education, reduction of carbon.

Mary: If there are more places that can reduce your recycling, it reduces costs. Durham priorities: reduce volume to landfill, reduce greenhouse & nitrogen pollution.

Nell: Education is a big component of what we do. Doing the right thing for the earth is the primary motivation for the community and IWMAC but if we have to sell it we have to emphasize the savings. When I say Durham wants to save money and reduce landfill waste, it depends on what it costs. I don't know how to separate out those things.

Jenn: I realized as you were talking about costs and what's good for the town that there might be economic development opportunities, other things missing from our list of goals.

For UNH it would be really helpful to look at this piece, the greenhouse gases. It might not make a huge difference, Turnkey verse compost.

Maggie: Oyster River's waste gets burned, incinerated in Maine or Mass.

Jenn: Lee and Durham?

Dean: I'm not sure where Lee's MSW goes. Where the NRRA thinks is best, I think.

Jenn: How do we get from these priorities to a draft statement?

Mary: Does the book help with the statement?

Chuck: Yes. Municipal composting means other systems aren't working. It could be at the municipality, volunteer, or composting at the home.

VI. Decision on meeting schedule

Maggie: I have to go.

Dean: Every two weeks?

Maggie: Meet more often at the beginning?

Jenn: Every two weeks is fine. Is this date and time good?

Group settled on 12 pm Monday March 15 for the next meeting.

VII. Expanded membership roster, new introductions

[see updates above]

VIII. Closing Actions

A. Future Meeting Dates:

12pm Monday March 15

VII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 3:03 pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Dean Rubine

[Dean's note to the group made after the meeting: We should have public comments on the agenda. Also we should make motions and seconds before voting.]

Appendix: Email exchanges mentioned above.

From: Alaina Rogers <arogers@strafford.org>

Date: Mon, Mar 1, 2021 at 8:01 AM

Subject: SRPC and the Regional Composting Working Group

To: Nell Neal <nellneal3@gmail.com>

Hi Nell,

Thank you for chatting with me on Friday about the Regional Composting Working Group.

Unfortunately, I won't be able to attend the meeting on Monday due to another commitment, so I've written up what SRPC has done to date and what we are looking forward to working on in regards to waste, recycling, and compost.

In the Fall of 2020, we hosted region-wide Recycling Roundtables to facilitate conversation on what issues municipalities are facing when it comes to waste, recycling, and composting. The main point we gathered from these talks was there is a lack of data on what municipalities are recycling, composting, and sending the landfill. There is also a lack of communication and collaboration among municipalities on what practices and procedures do and do not work when it comes to our waste systems. SRPC decided to create a GIS StoryMap to help our municipalities understand the story of waste in our region: what programs are available, where waste goes, and what resources would be helpful to our municipalities. This StoryMap is almost complete and I've provided some snapshots (attached) to give a glimpse of what it will look like. Once published, we hope to use the StoryMap to generate conversation on how our communities can work together to be more efficient in their waste programs and learn from each other.

SRPC is also interested in applying for [USDA's Solid Waste Management Grant](#) to continue funding our work with waste, recycling, and composting. A nearby regional planning commission uses this grant to promote educational materials, create signage, open and close transfer stations, and collect data, all related to their waste systems and SRPC would like to do something similar. This grant application window opens in October this year. It would be interesting to learn what the working group could

accomplish at a smaller regional scale and see how we could apply that to the larger Strafford county region, possibly by using this grant if we received it.

We're looking forward to hearing what the Working Group decides on for a vision and your timeline, so that we can chat further about what our involvement could be.

Thank you,

Alaina

From: John and Mary Caulfield <john_mary92@msn.com>

Date: Saturday, February 20, 2021 at 11:22 AM

To: "Andrews, Jennifer" <Jennifer.Andrews@unh.edu>, Phil Albright <harbourdesignnh@gmail.com>

Subject: RE: Compost

Caution - External Email

Hi Phil,

This week, I have been reading the correspondence between Jennifer, Will and you. If it works for the March 3rd morning rotary meeting I would like to update the rotary group on the Lee/Durham/Madbury working group current efforts towards regional composting. Please let me know if I can briefly give an update on March 3rd.

Thank you,
Mary Caulfield

From: Andrews, Jennifer <Jennifer.Andrews@unh.edu>

Sent: Thursday, February 18, 2021 10:38 AM

To: Phil Albright <harbourdesignnh@gmail.com>

Cc: John and Mary Caulfield <john_mary92@msn.com>

Subject: Re: Compost

Thanks, Phil, for this additional context. The grant was something Will Lenharth and I had discussed; he indicated that there were national grants made available through Rotary and he was thinking/hoping that it might make sense to submit something around this project. Sounds like that's not in the cards any time soon, which is good to know.

I've again copied Mary Caulfield, who is also on the working group; she'll connect with you about joining one of your meetings to update/discuss.

Thanks for your leadership, hope to be able to work together on this in some way, moving forward!

Best,
Jenn

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From: Phil Albright <harbourdesignnh@gmail.com>
Date: Tuesday, February 16, 2021 at 3:37 PM
To: "Andrews, Jennifer" <Jennifer.Andrews@unh.edu>
Subject: Compost

Caution - External Email

Early last year Al Howland spoke to our Rotary club about composting as a possible joint community project. I said I was interested in exploring the possibility with area communities. This was before covid -19 arrived and the landscape industry of which I am a part expanded to a record year. I am remiss I put the concept on hold as my duties with Rotary expanded as President elect both with our club, its extensive additional training, and our business.

We had no conversation about grants at that time. My intent was to create an exploratory meeting to determine interest with area communities and to get a feel for what might be some of the issues working with multiple towns and how we could build a program which benefits us all.

We purchase certified organic compost soil from Seacoast Farms for our business and customers. We have an organic vegetable garden and have discovered how wonderful the vegetables taste as well as our neighbors with whom we have shared our bounty.

I like what compost can do for us. At the same time we cannot continue to fill up our communities with mountains of garbage and allowing the resulting tons of methane produced to compound our carbon dioxide climatic disaster. Sustainable is much more attractive than extinction.

Would you or someone bring our Rotary club up to date by speaking about where the communities are in their exploration of a joint venture, sustainability, and what has been achieved to date?

We meet by zoom each Wednesday morning at 7:30 A.M. We start with the Pledge of Allegiance, say a short prayer, and then turn our meeting over to our speaker for about 20 to 25 minutes. We have March 3 and 24 dates available at this time.

Phil Albright
Speaker Coordinator
Durham Great Bay Rotary Club
Tel/text 603 502 9208