

**Regional Composting Working Group Minutes
Durham Town Hall, 1st Floor Conference Room
Monday December 6, 2021 4:15 pm**

Members present:

Maggie Morrison (ORCSD)
Dean Rubine (Lee Sustainability Advisory Committee)
Nell Neal (Durham Integrated Waste Management Advisory Committee)
Mary Caulfield (Durham Integrated Waste Management Advisory Committee)
Chloe Gross (UNH Sustainability Institute)
Jenn Andrews (UNH Sustainability Institute)
Chuck Cox (Lee Sustainability Advisory Committee)

Members absent: Evy Ashburner (ORCSD)

Public Present: N/A

Call to order: 4:20pm

I. Approval of minutes from Nov 8, 2021

Tabled to the next meeting.

Next meeting: 2 pm Monday Dec 20 or 4pm Wed 22?

Mary will check her calendar. Check email later.

[Next meeting: 2 pm Monday Dec 20]

Goal: approve report

II. Public comment N/A

III. Updates

Committee reviews a draft of the Final Report and Recommendations of the Regional Compost Working Group.

Dean: Chloe's report focuses more on business than this one. Should we emphasize business more? For Lee's point of view they all use private garbage services and rerouting their food waste through the transfer station imposes a cost on the town with unknown benefits.

Maggie: The committee looked at the value of including business in the discussion. They're mostly served by private haulers. A small section about why not to include business, what we

learned, to be explored further. We made an effort to include business, but it's a layer of complexity that a municipality doesn't want to take on at this point.

Dean: Businesses may benefit from group deals made by municipalities.

Jen: What the businesses do is pretty relevant in Durham from a perspective of community members, they rely on those businesses. Shouldn't we do a campaign about the Durham businesses that are composting? It's a different calculation that the municipalities would do, if there's a section here that we talked about, here's the logic about not holding formal [?]. We're leaving them alone for now. Ideally business should be included; practically we don't see how that would happen. It is an important component of our overall need for education. There's no one to go to to drive that in Durham.

Chuck: What we're doing is making a recommendation. They can accept it or not. Can't landfill, gotta compost. We shouldn't be telling the towns how to spend their money. Ideally, it would be prudent for Durham to reach out to greater Durham business to explore this opportunity to reduce food waste in a consistent and comprehensive manner.

Mary: The work of the RCWG. After "compost in the area".

Jen: The RCWG has done three main things: survey what we're already doing, landscape analysis of the four entities, survey of possible actions that would be appropriate, and make relevant recommendations.

The first thing we did was gather information about what we were doing, then what we could be doing. Put the section that provides the work of the group first. Make it not seem so ancillary.

Maggie: Let's all make a commitment under "Existing Food Waste Programs" to add a few sentences about what each of us, our committees and organizations, do. Pull more from Chloe's report.

Jen: What if we do here is a short list of what we've done -- see Gross 2021 for more details.

Maggie: I sent around a GCM document that mentioned food waste in stage 3. Case study environmental study group in July about how the city of Nashville integrated food waste into their global covenant.

Dean: Sentence about how food waste diversion could reduce greenhouse gases in the GCM.

Maggie: The School District has a draft of the Sustainability Management Plan. -- Include that as a reference.

Dean: I'll find it on the ORCSD website and add it.

Maggie: I added it at the end of the document.

Nell: My feelings. I really liked what Mary and I wrote. What does the committee feel about what we're going to be doing with that? Are we just taking our own recommendations to our towns?

Maggie: We were just going to go up to our respective organizations and this is what we think we should do.

Nell: Are we taking everyone's, this entire report, or just taking our recommendations to the town council?

Mary: I think the Durham presentation should be the report plus whatever. We have a whole report, this is it; we're coming to you with these recommendations.

Nell: Would it make more sense for each group to produce their own report?

Jen: This final report documents the work of the committee. Most important part: here's everything we found, here's what we found, what we decided to recommend.

Dean: Yes. Anyone's free to do what we want with the report afterward.

Nell: I would like to have the whole compilation to the governing body of Durham. In making the presentation. I just want to talk about Durham's recommendation. I would like that in there as a paragraph.

Dean: As far as I understand no one besides your group edited the Durham recommendation section.

Chloe will move that text back to the Durham recommendation.

Mary: We'll have the whole report to answer questions.

Nell: I can imagine someone on our council asking what is going on in Durham as business.

Maggie: It could also be a good report to share with the Strafford Regional Planning Commission; they might want to know. We came up with municipal issues, some capacity issues with UNH.

Dean: We should forward our final report to them.

Chuck: Lee hasn't been a member for a while but we're pushing the Select Board to rejoin. Add a recommendation: Lee should rejoin the SRPC. Let's continue to advocate for representation.

Dean: The LSC and our Selectperson Katrin Kasper have been advocating for Lee to rejoin SRPC.

Nell: Thanks Maggie, it was a great idea to connect this to the Global Council of Mayors. Chloe Mary and I met with Todd the other day -- down the road he wanted to include waste as part of the GCM. Chloe says: "Down the road is now."

Jen: I've been hesitant to suggest a connection because waste represents less than 1% of Durham's greenhouse gas. There's a ton of energy and momentum about GCM and this spring and summer there will be work to make a climate action plan about Durham, so now is the time to include it. That's just a small portion of our footprint. It's a big opportunity. Northeast has stringent regulations.

Nell: Food waste is still being hauled, a cost to discard. What will happen when UNH doesn't have that natural gas resource?

Jen: If we got everyone to compost at home, that's the ideal solution. UNH probably won't have landfill gas after 2029. It's good to capitalize on GCM, have in your back pocket an understanding of the numbers in case anyone asks about it. In most communities generally food waste is a stronger generator of greenhouse gas than in Durham now. Statistics are irrelevant in this context. All are clamoring for renewable gas.

Nell: Then what is our argument?

Jen: Turning food waste into nutrients, back into soil. The stronger argument is not creating waste in the first place.

Jem: Less than 1% of Durham's greenhouse gas comes from waste overall. Because the waste that goes to Turnkey has methane captured and piped to UNH.

Mary: What are some of the big methane emitters?

Jen: Fossil fuels, energy.

Jem: Our contract with Waste Management only goes to 2029. After that there are no guarantees.

Maggie: ORCSD incinerates trash. Goes to a trash to energy plan.

Durham is a college town, residents learning how to be responsible stewards, a culture of not generating waste in the first place and then diverting the waste generated.

Jem: I still think there's value in addressing issues on food waste and educating people about it.

Mary: We're in a unique situation where we capture the methane from our food waste.

Jen: People don't understand the global and national impact of food waste and landfills; that is a global problem. Educate.

Chloe: Paragraph at the start: This is the situation that Durham is in, but this is the reason why it's relevant.

Mary: The businesses are the biggest amount of food waste.

Nell: Why support composting more than we do?

Jen: Be a model, be prepared when the rules change?

Nell: Does WM/Turnkey capture all the methane?

Jen: Yes, it's intended to capture all the methane.

Mary: Isn't it better for the nutrients to go back into the ground?

Jen: Part of the reason we decided to talk about reducing food waste in the first place.

Maggie: Three of you figure it out.

Look for the meeting email.

Jen: In terms of the big picture: keeping anything out of the landfill is moving us away from a throwaway society. In a landfill, the heaviest part of your waste stream total is food waste; it's better to return those nutrients to the soil.

Maggie: Right now we're so focused on the method. Not diversified, not a smart idea.

Chuck: There are farms that are producing methane from manure; they still end up with compost. They are getting energy and compost.

Jen: The best of both worlds.

VI. New Business N/A

VII. Next Meeting

2 pm Monday Dec 20 Durham Town Hall

VIII. Adjourn

Adjourned 5:23

Respectively submitted,

Dean Rubine