

Resource Recycling Advisory Commission Meeting
Regular Meeting
January 24, 2022

Present: Alison Johnson, Krishna Winston, Tisha Zawisky, Rebecca MacLachlin, Izzy Guy

Not Present: Debbie Stanley, Chantel DeArmitt, Eleanor Nettleton

Public Present: Mike Humphreys

Staff: Kim O'Rourke, Recycling Coordinator

The Chair opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

Ms. Winston asked if the member of the public wanted to introduce himself. Mr. Humphreys reviewed his background and his passion for sustainability.

The minutes of the regular meeting of Nov. 22, 2021 & Dec 8, 2021 were accepted as presented.

Ms. Winston asked if anyone had any comments or questions on the Recycling Coordinator's report.

Ms. O'Rourke described recent retirements resulting in significant adjustments in the Public Works office.

Food Waste: She mentioned that the program for food-waste collection in school *kitchens* was moving forward, starting with five schools—Beman, MacDonough, Snow, Bielefield, and Farm Hill. Collecting post-consumer waste from the *cafeterias* would involve much larger quantities and prove more complicated.

Compost Garden: Members discussed the development of a demonstration Home Compost Garden on the property adjacent to the new Reboot Eco store. The garden would feature several types of home compost bins and educational signage. Ms. O'Rourke said the CT Compost Alliance was planning a series of field trips in the summer and fall, and this could be one of the destinations.

Earth Day Event: Russell Library is coordinating an event for Saturday, April 23 at Harbor Park, with Middletown Recreation involved; a variety of activities for families will be offered.

Paper Shred Event: Ms. O'Rourke noted the implications of a change in the ownership of the company used in recent years that had resulted in far less scheduling flexibility. The Commissioners discussed various alternatives. They considered the idea of charging residents for the service in order to try to reduce contamination. Ultimately they decided it was best for the City to keep the service free. The Commission decided to move forward with the new company that could offer more dates in April, preferably April 30. Ms. Winston felt it was important to stress that junk mail would not be accepted. Commissioners also suggested limiting containers to boxes and paper bags because trash bags get too heavy to handle easily, and paper often falls out and blows around.

Mixed Recycling: Ms. O'Rourke reported that the City was entering a new contract for mixed recycling, starting in Jan. 2022. She said the fixed charges in the contract (for processing and for disposing of residue and glass) had all increased and there was concern that glass and "other plastics" (excluding PET and HDPE containers) were not getting actually recycled. Commissioners talked about focusing on

getting a container for a glass drop-off; that would make it more feasible to get the glass recycled and would reduce the weight of the mixed recycling.

Carton Recycling Grant: Ms. O'Rourke reviewed the recent public education grant received from the Carton Recycling Council.

Sustainable Middletown: Ms. Winston reviewed the Sustainable Middletown Team's efforts. She said she hoped to have the purchasing supervisor and a representative of the BOE attend the March meeting to talk about their sustainability efforts. For the following month Joe Samolis might be invited. The next meeting will be Wed., Feb 2 at 5:30 pm on Zoom.

Swap Shack: Ms. Winston reviewed the progress made with the building. She acknowledged the help of Ms. MacLachlan and Mr. Allison in staining the shelving and getting the bulletin board fastened. Ms. Winston asked for help with installing signage to show where items should be placed. Ms. O'Rourke confirmed that the City would be providing electricity for lighting in the building. The following schedule for routine tidying and organizing was established:

Schedule

Wed. 26 (Wed) – Krishna

Feb 2 (Wed) – Izzy

Feb 5 (Sat) –

Feb 9 (Wed) – Rebecca

Feb 16 (Wed)– Krishna

Feb 19 (Sat) –

Feb 23(Wed) – Izzy

Grants: Ms. O'Rourke said she had accompanied members of Sustainable Meriden who were delivering bags for their co-collection program. She offered details on the program, funded with a State DEEP grant (see <https://www.meridenct.gov/government/departments/public-works/co-collection/>). Middletown's next meeting would take place on Feb. 17 to review the logistics for its pending application to DEEP for a grant involving food-waste diversion and unit-based pricing.

EPR Resolution: Ms. Winston reported the resolution on EPR for packaging had passed the Common Council with bi-partisan support and been forwarded to the City's legislators by the Mayor.

Ms. Zawisky asked Ms. O'Rourke to send out the link to sign up for monitoring the food-waste collection on Randolph Road.

Ms. Winston reported that Mr. Allison had left the Commission and Middletown, increasing openings on the Commission.

New Business

Ms. O'Rourke announced she was planning to organize a Compost Poster and Video contest for International Compost Awareness Day in May. The Recreation Department and Russell Library would co-sponsor the event. Ms. O'Rourke was working on getting Middletown Area Transit to agree to displaying the winning poster on its buses.

Ms. Guy announced that the Amazing Grace food pantry was working toward diverting its food waste to a pig farmer and making some effort to reduce its use of plastic bags. Ms. O'Rourke said she had responded to an email from James after she and Ms. Guy had met with him and the new director in August, and had shown that participating in the Feed the Earth program would actually save them money, but she had not heard back. Ms. Johnson said she was trying to save her take-out bags and give them to the food pantry so they would be reused at least once. Ms. Guy noted customers' insistence on having plastic bags for meat, frozen food, and produce, with only one or two items in each bag. This preference resulted in huge numbers of plastic bags being given out. She wondered how consumers could be persuaded to bring the bags to be reused, and asked whether would so-called compostable bags would be better. Ms. Johnson agreed that this conversation needed to be continued.

With a motion from Ms. Maclachlan, seconded by Ms. Johnson, and a unanimous vote in favor, the meeting adjourned at 8:27 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim O'Rourke

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Recycling Coordinator