

## **Swarthmore Environmental Advisory Council**

### **July 24, 2018 Meeting Minutes**

#### **Present**

Members: Elizabeth Jenkins, Annie Fox, Claudia Cueto, Corey Ullman, Matt McCabe, and James Verdi.

Associate Members: Jennifer Pfluger, Phil Coleman, Susan Kelly, Melissa Tier, and Danielle Callahan.

Borough Council Liaison Lauren McKinney

Guests: Susie O'Donnell and Bill Foster from aFewSteps.org.

#### **Community Recycling Update - Elizabeth**

Communities need to rethink recycling due to the ripple effects of China no longer accepting materials. Swarthmore will almost definitely be separating recycling streams, at least as far as having separate pick-ups for paper. Doing so makes sense from both environmental and cost management perspectives. Separating out the paper could significantly reduce weight.

Logistically, Neumann Paper, a local company, accepts a wide variety of paper products, including books, and they will pay the Borough for what they collect. We should have bins of different shapes and colors for the separate streams. We would still have weekly pick-ups, but would alternate which type of recycling is collected each week. The same hauler, B & L, could handle both streams, taking the materials to Republic (where it all goes now) one week, and the to Neuman Paper the next. We will need new bins and, while the Borough might need to pay for them upfront, Jane feels confident that we could get a grant from DEP for reimbursement.

Regarding costs, the standard weight is increasing to \$65/ton. Glass is only worth \$40/ton to Republic, and sorting (with the current level of contamination) costs them \$85/ton. Aluminum is worth the most to them. Right now, 40% of our stream is either glass or recycling. The contamination is 20% by weight. We could ask how low we could lower our price if we make alterations, such as removing paper or glass and reducing contamination. Republic offers an audit to try to reduce pricing, and they will even provide pictures to illustrate the types of contamination. Paper and corrugated cardboard comprises 41% of our recycling by weight, and Neumann will pay approximately \$3,000 for it.

Our trash is only \$33/ton. Glass is beneficial to the incinerator that receives Swarthmore's trash because it gets broken up and then can be used to cover the ash. However, encouraging people to throw out glass would be a hard sell, and then could create a habit that is detrimental in other locations. Jane spoke with Arrow Aggregates, a glass recycler. They receive glass from Republic, but it does not seem realistic for us to give them our glass directly.

Some additional points are that the 18-gallon bins for paper may be too small, and there are no lids. Susan says that water does not interfere with processing the paper, though. We do need to ensure that residents understand that overflow could be placed in either an additional bin or in a cardboard box. More importantly, though, recycling is ultimately an imperfect solution. We need people to understand that it isn't a fully sustainable system, and the real key is to reduce.

We need a targeted messaging campaign. For that purpose, we created the Recycling Messaging Committee. The members are Elizabeth, Melissa, Susie, and James. They will work on communicating a tiered system of goals to community members with the following priorities, in order:

1. Separate the streams;
2. Reduce contamination (the main sources are plastic bags, food, and garbage);
3. Aluminum products are preferable to glass or plastic; and,
4. Reducing use is ultimately the best solution.

Melissa pointed out that the EAC might not be the proper leader for a large educational campaign. She and others at Swarthmore College have done substantial work on recycling education and found that being in a room with people to directly explain the process is the best approach. They have a presentation, as well.

Claudia knows someone in marketing who might help with messaging. We could develop new signs for our community bins that have descriptive pictures. Swarthmore College is launching a similar change. We should also explore how towns with separate streams hand their community education. We could also teach people through SRS's sustainability committee, and perhaps have a First Friday activity for kids.

**Motion:** James moved and Elizabeth seconded a motion to recommend separating paper from the recycling stream into separate bins. All voted in favor.

### **College and Town Composting – Melissa**

Swarthmore College has a student intern who is working with restaurants and businesses in town regarding composting. The college has a fair amount of experience on campus with composting now, and can share what they have learned. The student specifically worked with inn (on contract), Hobbs, and the Co-op. Since the Co-op does compost, she has tried to understand how they make composting work. Could the Co-op perhaps partner with other businesses to help fill its own capacity?

Working with the Inn has been bigger project. It included interviewing staff members that work in different areas with the goal of conducting a green study to produce recommendations, mostly around waste. It would be beneficial to do a waste study for Inn to get a baseline for its waste streams, which would mean physically sorting waste to measure it. People can volunteer to help out.

At Hobbs, she really just started conversations with Bill, who seems interested. They need significant help as they are not even recycling, but the process has not progressed far.

The Internship almost over. How can this work continue? Houseplant Hospital would be interested in partnering with an intern. If anyone else is interested, they can stay after the meeting.

### **Citizens' Pipeline Risk Assessment**

Claudia stated that Tim is interested in having Swarthmore contribute.

**Motion:** Annie moved and Corey seconded recommending that Borough Council hear a presentation from the study's organizers. Lauren will check on the possibility.

### **Environmental Action Alerts**

Annie suggested creating a system for local EACs and townships to rapidly communicate time-sensitive environmental issues which require a rapid response. The idea is to reach further than the MMEAC and promote information sharing. It could be done through a listserv, perhaps. Susan and Annie will work on the logistics.

### **Pesticides**

Elizabeth has a sample of pesticide-use policies we could use as a starting point. Everyone should send resources to her for the EAC to review when time allows. Many towns are trying to use IPM in communal spaces. The MMEAC is interested in working on this.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.