

**City of Ann Arbor  
Solid Waste Resources Management Plan  
Advisory Committee  
November 14, 2018 Meeting Summary**

**Participant List – see Attachment #1**

**1. Welcome** - Cresson Slotten, City of Ann Arbor Project Manager for the Solid Waste Resources Management Plan (SWRMP) Project welcomed the participants. Highlights of his remarks are as follows:

- *The City provides daily services for collection and processing of materials from the community's waste, recyclable and yard waste/organics streams.*
- *Many things have happened, or changed over the past several years that affect ... some directly, some indirectly... the City's delivery of these services, including:*
  1. *The evolution of the downtown:*
    - *Very different business market, many more restaurants and bars*
    - *More, and denser residential housing*
  2. *Changes of the City as a job center: In early 2000's - most jobs in the city filled by City residents. Today, we have more jobs and the majority of the jobs are filled by non-City workers. So much of our "daytime population" is not necessarily aware and familiar with the City's programs and policies.*
  3. *The impacts of the Headlee Amendment on the revenues of the City's Solid Waste Fund - we are allowed up to 3 mills but are only collecting 2.3759 mils today.*
  4. *Reduction and changes in the City's work force*
    - *Leaner organization*
    - *Organizational changes*
    - *Retirements in the City*
  5. *Several aspects of the Solid Waste area today are contracted by the City - 11 different contracts and 7 different contractors.*
  6. *The challenges of the MRF shutdown:*
    - *Termination of the past operator*
    - *Condition of the equipment and facility*
    - *Inability to process recyclables locally/regionally*
  7. *Product manufacturers and changing consumer habits:*
    - *New and emerging packaging*
    - *Disposable items*
    - *The "Amazon Effect"*
    - *Electronics*
    - *The vast reduction in print newspapers*
  8. *Global markets and their effects locally*
    - *China's "Green Fence" and "National Sword"*
    - *Effects on commodity pricing and quality/contamination requirements*
  9. *Education and Outreach challenges:*
    - *An increasingly transient population*
    - *How people receive and digest information*
    - *The amount of time people give to learning outside information*
  10. *Washtenaw County amending its Solid Waste Plan:*
    - *Encouraging cooperation among jurisdictions and regional approaches*
    - *Recommendation for expansion of drop-off services within the County*
    - *Movement toward a potential regional approach to some aspects of resource management*

- *In view of the above strategic implications, the City has dedicated significant resources to:*
  1. *Conduct technical analysis combined with robust engagement to ensure that we have both hard data and first-hand insight into the future.*
  2. *Use the aforementioned data, to layout a strategic approach for the City on how best to provide solid waste, recycling and compost/organics management programs that meet the needs and desires of the community in a fiscally responsible and sustainable manner.*
  
- 2. **Advisory Committee Purpose** - Charlie Fleetham, Advisory Committee Facilitator from Project Innovations, Inc. reviewed the committee’s purpose, schedule, and participation expectations. These can be viewed in SWMRP Advisory Committee PowerPoint, Attachment #2, pages 2 through 4.
  
- 3. **Ann Arbor SWRMP Presentation** - Christina Seibert, Project Manager, Aptim Environmental & Infrastructure, Inc., reviewed the project scope, activities conducted to date, planned activities, and the critical questions that the project team is addressing (see Attachment #2, page 5 forward).
  
- 4. **Questions Regarding Project Scope and Topics Addressed by the SWRMP** - Advisory Committee members discussed in small groups the project scope and upcoming activities and identified questions they had regarding the project and its outcomes or deliverables. Questions were shared with the larger group and noted on flip charts in the room. The questions and the project team response to each questions are provided in Attachment #3.
  
- 5. **Facilitated Discussion** - A series of breakout groups formed to discuss five topics posed by the project team (see Attachment #2, page 19). A summary of feedback from each breakout group is summarized.
  - **Group #1 Discussion Topic: *There are too many solid waste contracts. They should be consolidated to a single contract.***
    - What is the context of issue/complaint?
    - Group felt strategic consolidation is important.
    - Not necessarily a single contract but again, focus on strategic consolidation.
    - Can we do 1-yr extension? Reasons included:
      - There is a group in DDA looking at holding their own contract for collection (like Republic Parking handles structures).
      - Concerns of how having a new City Council could affect process. Need to educate and give them time to understand issue.
      - 1-yr gives time for regionalization to more fully develop.
    - Need to know boundaries from City Council
    - System-wide consolidation might be counterproductive. Need haulers that care about recycling and have expertise.
    - Is contract administration the problem rather than too many contracts?
    - Look at in-house service provision like a contract.
  
  - **Group #2 Discussion Topic: *Our alleys are too crowded and we have enough challenges with the current services. Composting would be nice, but it’s not a top priority right now for the downtown.***
    - I agree... it is too soon, we have other problems that need to be dealt with.
    - It is a good idea to do composting in the downtown... we’ve tried it, but implementation was a struggle.
    - Concerned that with the upcoming contracts that we may be missing, or eliminating an opportunity if it isn’t included.
    - Bids for collections are based on expected tonnages, so if food waste collection is added later it will affect the in-place contract pricing for trash since it will reduce the trash tonnage.

- Perhaps food waste could be collected at a central collection point in larger containers rather than in the alleys ... perhaps one per block... maybe locate them in surface parking lots.
- Maybe replace some of the recycle carts in the alleys with compost carts?
  - But the recycle carts are already overflowing with material.
  - The food waste that would be going into the compost carts/containers is already going into other containers (trash or recycling), so you would think that there would be an offset allowing to remove trash/recycle containers to have room for compost containers.
- Hop Cat is doing it themselves, but it is expensive.
- Wonder if businesses will be willing to pay for the costs to do it?
  - We need to find out which businesses aren't paying now for solid waste services, and get all of them to pay.
- Are all of the alleys too crowded with carts currently?
- The Ant Alley (at/under the Maynard Parking Structure) has had issues, but it has improved... video cameras monitor who does what... it is usually the same people that don't do what they are supposed to do... a lot of people are working to keep it clean... it's a matter of holding people accountable... the customers/users are key to it working... it's about peoples' behavior, recycling correctly... the businesses themselves are the key... they need to buy into doing things correctly... turnover of staff is a big issue... maintaining, sustaining any process or behavior change is tough... peer pressure has helped.
- Suggested that we use the "5-S" process improvement system from Japan
  - It is a manufacturing process improvement, but could be applied here
  - A 5-step process where a manufacturing line is taken to be a "model" and changes in process are tried and results monitored/metrics captured
    - An alley could be identified as the "model" and working with the parties in the alley - - businesses, property owners - - new processes tried and results measured... may include some short-term costs to the parties, so they need to be part of the process... could use some of the items that work in other alleys, like the Ant Alley.
    - The items learned in the Model Alley could then be looked at for possible application in other alleys... but they may not be able to be applied exactly the same way due to the variability of the alleys.
  - There are experts at the U-M that could possibly assist in utilizing this approach/process.
- **Group #3 Discussion Topic: *Recycling is part of our City's DNA and we are proud of our history of being recycling leaders. Cost should not be the main driver of our recycling programs.***
  - The feeling that recycling is "in the DNA" of the City may be true for those where recycling is convenient - single-family residents in particular. But for multi-family residents and businesses, this may be less true.
  - Cost is something we can't ignore - we can't just recycle at any cost. And when sustainability is a goal, cost is a necessary consideration.
  - Costs are challenging for recycling. Revenues for recyclable materials vary. Landfill costs in Michigan are low. With these factors, recycling might not be the cheapest option to manage resources. Maybe longer term contracts (10 years?) would smooth cost fluctuations.
  - We need to back up and make sure our current program is being used right and that we are recycling right. This will give us better quality materials and result in better revenue / pricing.
  - The priority should be on sending as little to the landfill as possible through reduction and reuse, then identifying what in the waste stream is recyclable and will have the biggest impact on diversion rates (the "low-hanging fruit"). Deciding what is recyclable needs to consider what markets exist and whether they are economical.
  - To the degree that costs are passed along to customers, there needs to be equity. Businesses cannot continue to pay the same or increasing costs and receive less service for it in order for residents to get more programs or program expansions.

- Cost associated with recycling can incentivize behavior - the container deposit law and the high rate of capture it achieves is proof of that.
  - We need to consider ways to achieve economies of scale. For example, if there was a community-wide program for reusable take-out containers from restaurants, with drop-off or collection points for the containers conveniently located through the city, that could reduce the waste generated.
  - Services should be standardized through the region so that each community doesn't have different rules. That can provide economies of scale as well as improve outreach and awareness.
  - We need to consider how to align services offered to match the packaging that is being used and will be used in the future. The "How to Recycle" labels being used more on packaging need to be kept in mind so we maintain programs for at least the materials that are considered to be widely recyclable.
- **Group #4 Discussion Topic: *It's time to make our downtown businesses accountable and enforce solid waste ordinances.***
    - Solid waste should have its own code enforcement officer
      - Possibly this role can be housed under Community Standards, which already addresses solid waste.
      - The code enforcement officer needs to have mediation training since the role requires working with property owners that have shared spaces in relation to solid waste, such as alleys.
      - The code enforcement officer will need to establish ongoing relationships and work with people over time.
    - There needs to be clear and consistent consequences to violations.
    - Perhaps more monitoring devices should be installed, such as cameras in alleys or devices on carts.
    - The City should do periodic cleanings through the downtown to clean up.
- **Group #5 Discussion Topic: *Improving customer service should be Job 1.***
    - I am a downtown resident. Staff has been giving me different answers about recycling and composting. The first answer is often wrong and different staff members say different things.
    - There doesn't seem to be any firm direction/education on e-waste.
    - Need to restart the Tom McMurtrie program for pick-ups during Student Move-Out days.
    - We are not getting any help for Game Days. Not getting answers when I call on a Friday afternoon for help.
    - The City needs an ongoing education program. It should be global and local – work with individual neighborhoods, associations, religious organizations, schools, etc.
    - We like the See Click Fix app. We are receiving next day response!

**Attachment #1 - Advisory Committee Meeting #1 Sign-In Sheet**

## November 14, 2018 Solid Waste Resource Plan Advisory Committee Participants

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**Attachment #2 - SWRMP Advisory Committee PowerPoint Presentation**

(see separate pdf on project website at [a2gov.org/swrmp](http://a2gov.org/swrmp) )

**Attachment #3 - Responses to Questions About the SWRMP Project**

## **SWRMP Advisory Committee**

### **Meeting #1**

**November 14, 2018**

#### **Questions about the Project (received from small group breakouts after APTIM Presentation)**

- 1. Is the project timeline realistic given the contract renewal timeline? Can you extend the contract renewal timeline a year to allow for coordination with the outcomes of this plan?**

Response: At present, City staff do not intend to extend the contract expiration dates for the expiring contracts for recycling collection, recycling processing, and commercial waste franchise collection. The contracts have been aligned to sunset at the same time to allow flexibility and coordination in the re-procurement, and one of them has already been extended one year beyond its original sunset date. Furthermore, the current contractual arrangement with Recycle Ann Arbor for recycling collections requires the City to provide collection trucks for Recycle Ann Arbor. These trucks are beyond their useful life and the trucks cannot withstand another year of use. These contracts provide essential and ongoing services and are anticipated to be maintained going forward and therefore need to be procured in the near term. City staff are working with the SWRMP consultant to develop the scope of the new contracts and incorporate flexibility in the contracts to implement recommendations from the SWRMP when it is completed, and the potential for regional approaches to service delivery if those develop.

- 2. Who has the authority to ensure the completion of the plan and the recommendations therein?**

Response: The SWRMP is being completed at the direction of the City Council and has been budgeted for completion. Implementation responsibilities will be identified in the completed SWRMP and are expected to include responsibilities for City staff. To the extent that City Council approval is required to implement recommendations, those tasks will be brought forth to the Environmental Commission and/or City Council as appropriate by City staff. City Council, the City Administrator, and the Environmental Commission may all have additional roles in advocating for, or driving implementation of, SWRMP recommendations.

- 3. How does the project team plan to get public buy-in to the plan's recommendations?**

Response: Meetings of the Advisory Committee and presentations to the Environmental Commission over the course of the project are open to the public. We will also be conducting a scientific survey of a random sample of residents to measure average resident response to matters directly related to the SWRMP, such as interest and perceived need for expanded services and willingness to pay for services.

- 4. We would like to see data about each component of the diversion stream, including residential and commercial components, historical trends and projections, and your priorities for strategic focus.**

Response: This will be provided through the SWRMP to the extent that data collection and reporting allows for segregation of the components.

- 5. How will the plan address e-waste?**

Response: E-waste is not a specific element within the initial project scope, but it is an area that can be explored within the SWRMP. Because it is also an area of interest for Washtenaw County in implementation of its updated solid waste plan, the consultant team will build upon information gathered by the County for this area.

- 6. We suggest you benchmark communities with similar populations ... don't know how useful it is to compare us to Seattle or San Francisco.**

Response: The list of benchmark communities has been developed and presented for exemplar purposes at this point, and the consultant team will add or subtract from this list based on the availability of information from individual communities. Communities such as St. Paul / Ramsey County and Boulder / Boulder County have been suggested as additional benchmark communities to include because of their size and City/County collaboration similarities, and the team will seek to collect the appropriate benchmark data from these communities based on this suggestion.

- 7. We would like a clear understanding of the revenue stream and a 5-year forecast given current and forecasted conditions.**

Response: A 3- to 5-year cost forecast is an element of the scope of work of the SWRMP. This will define the need for revenues over the same time period. Funding options are also being reviewed and evaluated for the SWRMP and will be presented as part of the plan. The actual rates to be charged and revenues generated will be dependent on the implementation undertaken.

- 8. How will the plan respond to alley issues?**

Response: Alley conditions related to solid waste resource management have previously been reviewed by a City staff working group, and findings are being incorporated into the SWRMP. Options for downtown / alley service for solid waste resource management operations are being evaluated by the team, and will include investigation of best practices implemented in other communities.

**9. Does the plan address the recycling drop-off station?**

Response: The SWRMP will address the resource needs for the options evaluated and recommended in the plan. To the extent this includes a continued reliance on the services provided by the drop-off station, it will be addressed.

**10. How will the plan address FOG?**

Response: Options for fats, oils, and grease (FOG) management are being evaluated by the team, and will include investigation of best practices implemented in other communities. Stakeholders have expressed an interest in regulating through license or contract the activities of FOG providers, and this will be an element of the investigation.

**11. The plan should address the cost and effectiveness of increasing levels of service, including expansion of organics collection and Downtown service on Sundays, and the impact this will have on the solid waste fund balance.**

Response: This will be included in the SWRMP.

**12. We would like a better understand of our City's trash cycles.**

Response: This will be included in the SWRMP.

**13. Will the plan include consideration of Big Picture futuring, e.g. the McArthur Foundation, recent movements in packaging, EPA strategies for diversion, etc.**

Response: These elements of solid waste resource management are all potential topics for inclusion in the SWRMP. The degree to which the plan incorporates individual consideration of these and other "big picture", visionary concepts will be dependent on their specificity and applicability to the Ann Arbor resource management stream.

**14. The cost analysis needs to include a payer component (by class/by % of total).**

Response: The cost of service analysis will include a breakdown of costs by generator sector (residential, commercial) as well as by function within each sector (trash, recycling, compost). This will be used to evaluate the sustainability of current funding options and levels, and alternate funding options will also be evaluated with consideration of the required revenue to fund and sustain existing and new/future programs.

**15. Will the plan consider reduction and reuse?**

Response: This will be included in the SWRMP. Reduction and reuse efforts tie strongly to education and outreach, which is an additional specific element of the SWRMP.

**16. How can the Ann Arbor Public Schools, University of Michigan, and other educational institutions support the planning process/recommendations?**

Response: The Ann Arbor Public Schools and other educational institutions can participate in the planning process through attendance and participation at the Advisory Committee meetings and submittal of additional comment as appropriate or desired through that process. In addition, particularly in the area of education and outreach, stakeholders have expressed an interest in evaluating involvement of schools and students as both an audience for, and provider of, education and outreach services, and this will be considered in the SWRMP.

**17. How will the plan address our need for Move-Out support?**

Response: Move-Out support is an area of interest that has been identified by various stakeholders and will be considered through review of best practices implemented in other communities and assessment of costs to raise the level of service to address needs during discrete periods such as move-in, move-out, game days, and special events.

**18. Has Council set any boundaries for the project?**

Response: In April 2018, City Council passed a resolution limiting the privatization or outsourcing of certain solid waste resource management functions. Through ongoing planning by City staff for re-procurement of existing service contracts and alignment of solid waste resource management services, the limitations imposed through this resolution are being further discussed. No other boundaries have been set for the project to the knowledge of City staff and consultant teams.

**19. The plan needs to consider commercial and construction diversion opportunities.**

Response: This will be included in the SWRMP.