

**City of Ann Arbor
Comprehensive Organics Management Plan
Commercial Advisory Committee
January 25, 2017 Meeting Summary**

Participant List – see Attachment #1

Desired Outcomes: The facilitator polled the participants regarding their desired outcomes from the meeting. Most of the comments concerned the preliminary Commercial Organics Management Plan recommendations which were distributed prior to the meeting.

- The City needs to address the outcomes of the Alley Task Force. All alley issues need to be worked out and ironed out before going forward with any organics management plan. (Several participants agreed with this comment.)
- Agree with the pre-implementation commercial survey. Need to allow businesses to explain why they wouldn't want to participate in a voluntary compost collection program.
- Like the education and branding components.
- How does Biodigester facility integrate into this plan?
- Can the compost facility handle the increased amount of food waste?
- How would implementation be phased in? How will you address move from voluntary to mandatory? What is overall cost of plan?
- How do we get to the mandatory program - the report is not specific about process or time?
- Likes food donation and container sharing strategy in small spaces.
- Very excited about where report is going.
- Report should address food waste in public schools - need educational component in schools.
- We want more specificity regarding food donation outlets. If food is donated to non-profit hunger relief agency, there are tax benefits and food safety benefits. Not sure about broad based outreach and implementation of coupons (seems nebulous). Regarding guidelines, the City should work with agencies that manage food relief. Food Gatherers willing to work with the City measuring waste. This would require more resources/could be option that City would want to consider.
- If program results in increases in donation, we need to think through the impact - more usable donations but also more waste to send to compost (which is a cost).
- We need evaluation of feasibility of a mandatory program which addresses cost. Businesses don't want to spend resources and only catch minimal waste.

Review of Committee Input: See Attachment #2, slides 2-4

Update on Ann Arbor Biodigester Project – Matt Naud provided an update on the City's Biodigester project. Highlights included:

- What is a biodigester? It's a place where you bring organic wastes, principally residual solids from WWTP/FOG/depackaged food. Yard waste is not good material in a biodigester.
- WWTP spends \$1M a year for land application (during warm-weather, drier months) and disposal (remainder of year) – solids are clean and good for land application but there are limits on the types of fields and quantity that can be applied.
- In the biodigester, organics are cooked in anaerobic (no oxygen) process, methane gas is created and stored in tanks. Gas can be converted to electricity (City currently collects methane from closed landfill and power goes to DTE), or the gas can be cleaned and put into natural gas grid or to power vehicles.
- Best option is putting natural gas into grid; federal credits are available but don't want to count on those credits to make facility financially viable.

- Initial design requested an overbuilt system – key systems will be redundant. Current estimated cost is \$27M - doesn't make economic sense, but looking at possible cost reductions by moving centrifuges from WWTP to biodigester facility, reallocating personnel to reduce costs of staffing, possibly reducing redundancies.
- Will meet with contractor this month to continue refining study.
- Regarding mandatory element – can't do it until we can handle all materials. WeCare can take more material – handling everything fine now, but there is a limit to how much can be composted without a change in technology.
- Cautionary with biodigester – in Lowell, MI a biodigester began to leak waste and gas almost caused it to blow up.
- Biodigester would still have waste to manage (though much smaller volume); since it has human waste it can't go to compost facility without much more stringent testing / quality control.
- Tipping fees – it's actually cheaper to landfill in Michigan than to compost; landfill cost is about \$14/ton in Michigan, compared to about \$90/ton in Portland, Oregon.

Committee Member Comments:

- Is there estimated annual operating cost? *Yes, about \$1M a year.*
- Are there significant costs to get material from WWTP to biodigester facility? *The cost is minimal as we are already trucking waste now from the plant to more distant fields / landfill. (Biodigester would likely be located on Wheeler Center complex; similar uses, compost facility, required utilities all present.)*
- Will it just include AA waste? *We are only looking at City now . . . would need long term contracts with other entities . . . we are also thinking about City managed vs. County managed.*
- When will the project be discussed with the public? *There will be a presentation at the February Environmental Commission meeting.*

Background Information Regarding Recommendations - See Attachment #2, slides 10-11

Breakout Groups Discussion on Preliminary Recommendations: Strengths/Concerns and Questions/Priorities: The facilitator established breakout groups to discuss the presentation on the preliminary Commercial Organics Management Plan recommendations. Comments included:

- Strengths
 - You included food donation as significant portion.
 - More food we can take out of waste stream the better.
 - Like the fact that plan is being developed.
- Questions and Concerns:
 - Sharing alley space concept: is the one-person accountability proposal feasible? Solving alley situation is biggest downtown issue. Will someone step up to run alleys?
 - Need priorities broken out. Reduction and Donation should be split out. Both are difficult, and approach to each is different.
 - Regarding donation: seems like residential recommendations got mixed into the commercial side. Small scale residential recommendation doesn't necessarily support large scale commercial needs.
 - Doesn't address costs of food gathering operations. If we are increasing donations, need to address cost to entities managing donations.
 - Providing incentives and awards to residents, doesn't support commercial strategy.
 - Alleys need to be addressed first. When will alley report be submitted?
 - Mandatory collection has a lot of challenges – difficult for business owners to hire extra staff to separate/to get waste to the curb.
 - Mandatory collection also impacts processes that business already have in place.
 - Regarding commercial bins: you are talking about dumping waste into the bins, need to identify who is going to clean bin. If you just hose it out, waste goes into storm sewer and is not appropriate. Shared spaces make it even more difficult. The cleaning option/solution is very important.

- Regarding cost structure: would be helpful to see scenarios of costs. Businesses are paying millage and also have to pay garbage collection. You might have lack of interest in the voluntary portion if business costs increase further. Cost tolerance should be part of the survey to businesses in advance of an RFP.

Follow on Schedule:

- Provide any additional comments in writing to Christina S. / Charlie / Christina G.; requested by 2/3/17 to allow time to consider before moving forward
- February 23rd- Draft recommendations presented to Environmental Commission at City Hall
- March 23rd or April 27th – Final draft of Organics Management Plan presented to Environmental Commission
- Committee members will receive email notices of future presentations to the Environmental Commission

All meeting summaries, agendas, and presentations are available at:

<http://www.a2gov.org/organicsplan>

Attachment #1: January 25, 2017 Meeting Participant List

Last	First	Organization	Email
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Attachment #2: Presentation Slides - provided as a separate document**Attachment #3: Preliminary Recommendations - provided as a separate document**