

Minutes of the Schools Recycling & Composting Group Meeting on September 16, 2020

Prepared by Julia Greene, MAC NE3

EMAIL LIST: joanna o'connell <millerjoanna@comcast.net>; Rebecca Interbartolo <rinterbartolo@yahoo.com>; Amy Donovan <amy@franklincountywastedistrict.org>; Lin Jensen <linsbridge@gmail.com>; Fritzie Nace <fritzie.nace@gmail.com>; Sripriya Narasimhan <lpriyas@hotmail.com>; Cynthia Arens <cindyaren@hotmail.com>; Retta Smith (retta.smith@gmail.com); Cosgrove, Joseph <jcosgrove@ci.methuen.ma.us>; Joyce Losick-Yang (joyce.losickyang@andoverma.us); jenewman (jenewman@natickps.org); Jillian Wilson Martin (jwmartin@natickma.org); Joyce, Melissa <mjoyce@townofchelmsford.us>; Eric Richard (erichard@stoneham-ma.gov); Alicia Hunt <ahunt@medford-ma.gov>; Rachel Oliveri <roliveri@arlington.k12.ma.us>; Mirza Kathi (kmirza@taunton-ma.gov); Heather Billings <heather.billings@cetonline.org>; McGovern, Ann (DEP) <ann.mcgovern@state.ma.us>; Samantha Flanagan <sflanagan@cityofmelrose.org>; Joyce, Melissa <mjoyce@chelmsfordma.gov>

Participants:

Julia Greene, MAC NE 3 MassDEP
Amy Donovan, Program Director, Franklin County Solid Waste Management District
Lin Jensen, Lexington Green Teams
Fritzie Nace, Winchester Schools Composting & Recycling
Sripriya Narasimhan, Belmont Schools Composting and Recycling
Cynthia Arens, Lexington Green Team
Retta Smith, Medford Schools Composting and Recycling
Joseph Cosgrove, Methuen Environmental Planner/Energy Manager
Joyce Losick-Yang, Andover Sustainability Coordinator
Jean Ellen Newman, Natick Public Schools Recycling Coordinator
Jillian Wilson Martin, Natick Sustainability Coordinator
Melissa Joyce, Chelmsford Sustainability Manager
Rachel Oliveri, Arlington Schools Sustainability Coordinator
Mirza Kathi, MAC SE2 MassDEP
Heather Billings, Environmental Specialist, School Programs at CET
McGovern, Ann (DEP), Consumer Waste Reduction Coordinator MassDEP

On list but did not attend:

Joanna Miller O'Connell – North Andover School Compost & Recycling Program
Eric Richard, Stoneham DPW Deputy Director
Alicia Hunt, Medford Director of Energy & Environment
Rebecca Interbartolo, Melrose Schools Composting & Recycling
Samantha Flanagan, Melrose Recycling Coordinator

Agenda

- Introductions - Introduce yourself, tell the group what you are working on or were working on before COVID hit, whether your school(s) are back open, any new COVID issues to be addressed, what you could use the group's help on.
 - o 40 min (no more than 2-4 min each for 9-13 participants)

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- Next Steps – Google Group (set up)?, Quarterly Zoom Check-in (set up)?, Working Group on a particular issue? Others to invite? Other step?
 - o 20 min

Intros:

Julia Greene – MAC NE3 and would like to support work going on in schools

Heather Billings – CET, works supporting schools in two ways, through SMRP Schools Grants providing technical assistance and The Green Teams, providing technical assistance.

Ann McGovern – Manages the SMRP Schools grants and the composting programs. Two announcements:

1) Pickup of composters and recycling bins has restarted

2) Nov. 18 there is a MassDEP Schools Recycling Webinar

Kathi Mirza – MAC SE2, Years of experience. Created different handouts on school recycling and waste bans. Spearheads MAC tabling on schools recycling & composting at annual conferences to reach facilities managers, school administrators and school committee members and food service personnel.

Amy Donovan - Franklin County Solid Waste District includes 21 towns in the NW corner of MA. Almost all schools including 7 HSs, are composting except for two tiny elementary schools. Anecdote that farmer that sells compost was able to move into the black financially by selling all his compost to th Amy has years of experience. The schools are mostly remote for this school year due to COVID-19.

Fritzie Nace – Winchester Schools. 2012 DEP Grant. They brought composting to two schools by 2nd school has stopped composting. She works out of DPW but disconnect with School Administration, when school principals change, whole policies inside schools change, like discontinuing composting.

Cindy Arens – Lexington Green Teams. All 9 Lexington schools composting, part of a composting contract. There is a disconnect right now during COVID on proper packaging, they are using a lot of single use and plastic wrapping. Lexington is volunteer run and disconnect between volunteers and teachers. Teachers are the institutional piece of the schools, yet the volunteers run the program and put the program in place and keep it going.

Lin Jensen – Lexington Green Teams. Lin added that composting started in 2012, and that right now volunteers can't be in schools.

Rachel Oliveri – Rachel works part-time as schools sustainability director and worked on bringing composting to all 10 schools over time, and maintaining the program. Contract with Black Earth. At this point all schools back with hybrid model minus the high schools due to HVAC issues will come back Jan 1. Right now working with BOH and custodians to figure out recycling and composting in classrooms and cafeteria sorting stations.

Sripriya Narasimhan – Belmont Green Team – Now have composting in all four grades in middle schools. Problems with changes in principals and disconnect with Administration. They want parents and a teacher to take ownership of the program. It would be good if the DPW could have a universal message

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as well as the Administration. Green Team activity coming from the bottom up but there is a need for top down policy and messaging.

Retta Smith – Medford ran a compost pilot this year in the high schools. Seniors through their environmental group formed out of the [Center for Citizenship and Social Responsibility](#) worked on the project. Unfortunately the pilot was shut down in early March as a result of the COVID academic. Retta was also working on auditing recycling, trash and composting needs in all schools to develop implementation plans. Improving recycling and introducing composting in kitchens, and custodian buy-in and cooperation were identified issue in several schools.

Joyce Losick Yang – Andover Sustainability Director began working with the school administration when EPA recognized school program began having issue that affected the school contract with Black Earth—mainly compostable tableware that the vendor did not want in the compost and other contamination issues. Andover is requesting a SMRP grant to convert from compostables to dishwashers and reusable tableware—dishes and utensils. Andover is also working on an Andover Schools Recycling and Composting policy that will become part of the Administration's charge to improve ownership waste reduction efforts. Another thing Joyce is watching is the merger of the town and schools custodial contract and how that will effect implementation of programs. Also talked about very successful food rescue programs in all schools – parent leader led.

Jane Ellen Newman – Natick Schools. Jane Ellen began working this past year and her work is supported jointly by the DPW and school administration. She conducted waste audits in 6 schools this past year and through the towns new bans on Styrofoam and straws, they were able to convert trays to compostable and no straws in the schools. Introduced food share in elementary schools. She is working with kitchens to improve recycling. Jane Ellen is interested in waste ban information and identifying responsible authority for school contracted kitchens—Aramark for the implementation of diverting waste ban items. Hybrid Model this fall.

Jillian Wilson Martin - Natick Sustainability Coordinator – Added that she saw the need to work on policy, citing Joyce's comments. There is a need to strengthen policies inside school administrations and accountability for waste bans by food service, contracted or in-house.

Melissa Joyce – Chelmsford. Applied for a SMRP grant to have all schools begin compost programs. Schools are operating remotely this fall—issues with HVAC systems. Melissa also has experience as a Facilities Manager for a private country-day school that had a composting program. Melissa reports to both DPW and Facilities Directors which is a plus for implementation of programs.

Joe Cosgrove – Methuen Envir Planning and Energy Manager. Now a Green Community and also looking at improving waste reduction. Currently working with school administration to inventory and assess school recycling and potential for composting programs.

Issues:

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- Waste Bans Education and Enforcement for schools and food service contractors. Some are experiencing issues with getting kitchens (in-house and contractors) to adhere to state waste bans related to recycling.
- Waste Bans Education and Enforcement with custodial staff – Most experience issues with getting custodial staff to implement proper recycling throughout the school(s), and with implementing organics/composting diversion. Custodial staff cite union contracts and mandates from school administration
- Adoption of School Recycling, Waste Reduction and Zero Waste Policies – The group felt an important step was to have school committee/school administration implement updated waste reduction policies that cite and adhere to state waste bans as an important step toward institutional ownership *inside* school systems. Many members of this school's group are volunteers or in paid part-time positions with their home in the DPW, yet working in the schools and trying to influence decisions made by the school administrators, principals and facilities managers. Right now Andover is working to get the school administration/school committee to pass updated waste reduction/recycling policies to get the school administration to actually own the policies that can create the institutional change.
- Conversion from Single-use Ware to Dishwashers and Reusable Ware in Schools – Show both economic and environmental benefits to conversion. More information, case studies, and grants from MassDEP to facilitate conversions. In building of new schools, get in early to comment/influence process to design schools for sustainable materials management: Kitchens with enough room for dishwashers and reusable ware adjacent to cafeteria, room for slurry tanks, compactors for both trash and recycling, room for both trash/recycling/compost receptacles throughout school, providing water bottle filling stations etc.
- COVID Shut Down of Recycling and Composting Programs and More Single Use - Many schools/districts are experiencing these shutdowns and volunteer led programs are shut down because volunteers are not allowed in schools that have resumed in-person classes and hybrid programs. More single use wrap and utensils are being used and citing COVID health concerns for use.
- Best Practices and Lessons Learned – There was a request for more case studies both of successes and failures on School Recycling and Composting.

Next Steps:

- Set up a Google Group for communication and Google Drive to store/share resources. Julia
- Contact sheet – store on Google Drive for School's Group members, include website links (provided by Lin Jensen) – Julia
- Set-up another meeting in 60-90 days, with one of the issues listed above as the topic.
- Schedule a planning team meeting for next steps – last week Sept/first week of Oct.
- Ann McGovern shared Template for School Recycling Policies [here](#) on MassDEP Website and invited everyone to attend the Schools and Green Team Webinar to be held on Nov. 21. Registration is [here](#). Also, she noted that Green Team members can apply for and pickup composters and recycle bins once again.
- Kathi Mirza sent around the Waste Bans Factsheet [here](#).
- Heather Billings and Amy Donovan directed members to the many resources on The Green Teams website [here](#).

Chat from Zoom Meeting on 9/16/2020

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From Lin Jensen to Everyone: 10:39 AM

Sripriya, for new school buildings, I'd advocate for dishwasher in the kitchen and water bottle filling stations. www.LexingtonGreenTeams.org. has some resources on why dishwasher in schools is better than single use disposable ware.

From Jillian Wilson Martin to Everyone: 10:40 AM

Preach Joyce!

From Fritzie Nace to Everyone: 10:44 AM

Be LOUD and PERSISTENT. Winchester lost a great opportunity there since the high school is our central food prep area and the dishwashing area was built back in the kitchen with no access to the cafeteria...ugh!

From Sripriya Narasimhan to Everyone: 10:45 AM

I am trying hard. Not sure how successful I will be :-)

From Lin Jensen to Everyone: 10:46 AM

Is there funding or grant from DEP?

From Rachel Oliveri to Everyone: 10:50 AM

Is there a high school rebuild committee in Belmont? In Arlington they were open to creating a sustainability subcommittee to address all the waste and energy issues. I hope you can find a team of parents to work on this with you, Priya.

From Cindy Arens Lex to Everyone: 10:50 AM

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/smrp-municipal-grant-application-guidelines/download> School Assistance grants will cover dishwashers

From Sripriya Narasimhan to Everyone: 10:51 AM

Thanks Rachel. I think there is a team. I will connect with them. Great Idea!

From Fritzie Nace to Everyone: 10:53 AM

Sripriya, see if you can get on the committee as a sustainability rep. There is data - I know Lin has used - to show the benefits of reusable/washable dishware. Showing long-term cost benefit is a good argument.

From Amy Donovan to Everyone: 10:54 AM

See the video that The Green Team made about our programs at the link below. My announcements in lunches and all-school presentations have increased buy in. Also, see one of the 1st programs in the state, Northfield Elementary which has been composting for 20 years via a compost dumpster that goes to Martin's Farm. <https://thegreenteam.org/recycling-facts/food-waste-reduction/>

From Sripriya Narasimhan to Everyone: 10:54 AM

I will definitely do that Fritzie. Thanks! One of the challenges with the reusable ware is they bring up the cost of personnel.

From Fritzie Nace to Everyone: 10:55 AM

I think the data show there can be a long-term savings over the disposables and the cost of trash hauling/processing.

From Amy Donovan to Everyone: 10:56 AM

In one of my communities the value of a job - the person who washed dishes - won out over buying and throwing away disposables.

From Lin Jensen to Everyone: 11:00 AM

Well said Amy! Thanks for the link!

From Sripriya Narasimhan to Everyone: 11:05 AM

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Is there a way to find data on how much trash/recycling tonnage each town generates

From Cindy Arens Lex to Everyone: 11:07 AM

Would highly recommend getting familiar with the DEP Draft Solid Waste Master Plan.

<https://www.mass.gov/guides/solid-waste-master-plan#the-draft-2030-solid-waste-master-plan->

From Retta Smith to Everyone: 11:07 AM

Sripriya You should be able to get that info from your city's DPW. I'm not sure if it's public info for any town though

From Sripriya Narasimhan to Everyone: 11:07 AM

Thats great. I will check with the DPW

From Amy Donovan to Everyone: 11:09 AM

Sripriya, see this link for MA municipalities data

<https://www.mass.gov/lists/recycling-solid-waste-data-for-massachusetts-cities-towns>

From Ann McGovern, MassDEP to Everyone: 11:13 AM

School Recycling Policy Template is on Mass.gov. Search on SMRP and scroll down to the template.

Here:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/school-recycling-assistance-sample-recycling-policy-template-0/download>
www.thegreenteam.org has a lot of resources available to help model programs for other schools.

Hover over the tabs on top for additional topic webpages. Subscribe to the newsletter at top of webpage if you aren't already receiving it, has lots of info emailed monthly.

There is a state regulation that bans disposal of paper, cardboard, bottles and cans, including at schools.

Go to mass.gov and search on Waste Bans for more details.

From Cindy Arens Lex to Everyone: 11:14 AM

<https://www.mass.gov/guides/massdep-waste-disposal-bans>

From Fritzie Nace to Everyone: 11:14 AM

Winchester has adopted a new Climate Action Plan that is stipulating some of these steps, so that adds some teeth.

From Rachel Oliveri to Everyone: 11:15 AM

Do you have a copy or link to that, Fritzie?

From Fritzie Nace to Everyone: 11:16 AM

My understanding that a town needs to show that it is complying with the Waste Ban in order to get any DEP grant money for the DPW

I can forward a copy of Winchester's Climate Action Plan.

From Rachel Oliveri to Everyone: 11:16 AM

Thank you!

From Sripriya Narasimhan to Everyone: 11:16 AM

That would be great!

From Ann McGovern, MassDEP to Everyone: 11:17 AM

Nov. 18, 2020 - School Recycling webinar presented by Massachusetts Dept. of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) and THE GREEN TEAM. Learn how to plan and implement school recycling programs that meet the minimum eligibility requirements of MassDEP's Sustainable Material Recovery Grants. In 2021, municipal grant applicants will need to certify that paper, cardboard, bottle and can recycling is available in all municipal buildings, including schools. Learn how to help get recycling into your school district. Register at <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/264879357516365069>

From Fritzie Nace to Everyone: 11:17 AM

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I also discovered that the MA Board of Education School Lunch Program requires schools to provide free water at lunch. I've tried to make this known since our Food Service provider sells bottled water at lunch.

From Lin Jensen to Everyone: 11:17 AM

www.LexingtonGreenTeams.org

From Kathi Mirza to Everyone: 11:19 AM

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/fact-sheet-your-municipality-waste-ban-compliance/download>

From Amy Donovan to Everyone: 11:20 AM

DEP folks, are there grants or assistance for school dishwashers?

From Cindy Arens Lex to Everyone: 11:21 AM

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/smrp-municipal-grant-application-guidelines/download> School Assistance grants will cover dishwashers

From Amy Donovan to Everyone: 11:22 AM

and are there grants or assistance for buying reusables?

Joyce do you mean red on the MassDEP map, or red politically?

From Ann McGovern, MassDEP to Everyone: 11:22 AM

RDP funds can be used for reusables.

From Cindy Arens Lex to Everyone: 11:22 AM

<https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-massdep-reduce-reuse-repair-micro-grant>

From Amy Donovan to Everyone: 11:24 AM

Map of PAYT programs in Massachusetts that shows town by ton trash volumes per household, where some towns are shown in red:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/map-how-much-trash-did-we-throw-out-in-2019/download>

From William Buckley (Joe Cosgrove) to Everyone: 11:24 AM

I have to sign off. Thank you all!!

From Fritzie Nace to Everyone: 11:24 AM

Kids are a great avenue for culture change!

From Rachel Oliveri to Everyone: 11:24 AM

Yes, agree, Fritzie!