

Meeting Notes

Responsible Recycling Task Force Meeting #2

June 1, 2018 - 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

King Street Center 201 S. Jackson Street, Seattle, WA 98104

Members Present:

April	Atwood	Seattle University, SWAC Vice Chair
Rika	Cecil	City of Shoreline
Julie	Colehour	C+C
Sabrina	Combs	City of Bothell
Tony	Donati	City of Kent
Susan	Fife-Ferris	Seattle Public Utilities
Cynthia	Foley	Sound Cities Association
Jeff	Gaisford	KCSWD
Sego	Jackon	Seattle Public Utilities
Jennifer	Jessen	Public Health
Kevin	Kelly	Recology, SWAC Chair
Linda	Knight	City of Renton, MSWMAC Vice Chair
John	MacGillivray	City of Kirkland
Kim	van Ekstrom	KCSWD
Ken	Marshall	KC SWAC
Michelle	Metzler	Waste Management
Meg	Moorehead	KCSWD
Joan	Nelson	City of Auburn
Emily	Newcomer	Waste Management
Joyce	Nichols	City of Bellevue
Yolanda	Pon	Public Health
Janet	Prichard	Republic Services
Andy	Rheaume	City of Redmond
Stephanie	Schwenger	City of Bellevue
Lisa	Sepanski	KCSWD
Matt	Stern	Waste Management
Penny	Sweet	City of Kirkland, MSWMAC Chair
Hans	VanDusen	Seattle Public Utilities

Consultants:

Julie Colehour, Facilitator, C+C

Colette Marien, Meeting Coordinator and Notetaker, C+C

Agenda Item #1: Welcome & Introduction (*called to order by Jeff Gaisford at 9:03 am*)

Discussion:

- *Jeff Gaisford* reviews agenda items and asks that people not at the first Responsible Recycling Task Force meeting to introduce themselves.



- Individuals who were not at the first meeting introduce themselves, including *Rika Cecil, Yolanda Pon, Jennifer Jessen, Michelle Metzler, and Susan Fife-Ferris*, followed by introductions from the entire room.
- *Jeff Gaisford* asks the room to provide any comments, edits or suggestions on the meeting minutes that were sent out from the first Responsible Recycling Task Force meeting on April 30, 2018.
 - There is positive feedback on the amount of detail provided in the meeting minutes.
 - *Janet Prichard* requests that the group has a chance to review the minutes before they are made public.
 - The group agrees that draft minutes will be sent to the Task Force for comments before being finalized and once final will be shared with SWAC and MSWMAC.

Action Items:

- Provide time for the Task Force to review the meeting minutes before they are made public. Once finalized, meeting minutes will be shared with SWAC and MSWMAC.

Agenda Item #2: Task Force Problem Statements (*called to order by Julie Colehour at 9:08 am*)

Discussion:

- *Julie Colehour* introduces the Responsible Recycling Task Force problem statement and requests that the statement be viewed at a high-level during today's meeting, with closer review and comments sent to *Colette Marien* via email by June 13.
- *Julie Colehour* reminds the room of the short-term goals, long-term goals, outcomes, and role of the task force:
 - **Short Term Goal:** To help identify near-, mid- and long-term actions in response to reduction in export markets for mixed recyclable materials due to China National Sword policies.
 - **Longer Term Goal:** To help establish commitment across the region to responsible recycling and domestic sorting/processing of curbside recyclables.
 - **Outcomes:** Prepare a report with actionable items and recommendations for future action by all; if possible, develop interim tools for communications and other topics that are more immediately available.
 - **Role of Task Force:** Not to make decisions, rather to learn about the problem, understand activities that are being implemented elsewhere and opportunities for change. They will provide guidance on next steps that will be brought back to county advisory committees and decision makers.
- *Julie Colehour* provides additional context on the goals and outcomes, including:
 - The short-term goal is about addressing the China Sword situation as quickly as possible
 - The longer-term goal is to move towards responsible recycling to make recycling work in the long-term
 - The outcome will come in the form of a final recommendation document for consideration by the King County advisory committees.
 - The role of the task force is to learn about the problem and provide guidance to decision makers rather than to problem solve at the meetings.



- Next, *Julie Colehour*, delves into the specifics of the problem statement, which is passed out in the form of a handout to the room. The problem statement states:
 - Key challenges facing the recycling industry provide an opportunity for King County to improve and create a responsible and effective recycling system for the future. There are two problems the Responsible Recycling Task Force will address:
 - **Short-Term:** China's import restrictions (China National Sword) have reduced markets for mixed paper and mixed plastics
 - **Long-Term:** Recycling in King County suffers from three major issues:
 - Contamination
 - Market Vulnerability
 - Recycling is not free
- *Julie Colehour* explains that the short-term problem is the closure of the Chinese market and needing to find a different place for 138,000 tons annually, of materials to be processed. This figure does not include Seattle.
- *Julie Colehour* explains the long-term problem statement, noting that future meetings will focus more on the long-term problems but that it's important to keep the long-term in mind as they will help drive recommendations around the short-term goals. The long-term problems include:
 - Contamination:
 - 5-10% of materials that go into MRFs come out as residuals
 - Contamination is driven by consumer confusion and the materials being put into commingled bins and is exacerbated by the fact that packaging is rapidly changing
 - Market Vulnerability:
 - 40% of recyclables in King County are affected by China Sword
 - There is a lack of domestic markets available and limited capacity at local MRFs to store materials on site while they look for alternative markets.
 - Recycling is not free:
 - Revenue from recycling does not cover the full cost of recycling
 - Secondary domestic processing is available, but those costs may be greater than costs to export
 - Haulers and MRFs are requesting waivers and surcharges
 - Minimized landfill capacity may lead to increased cost
- *Stephanie Schwenger* notes her disagreement with the long-term problem, stating that in Bellevue's contract the cost of processing and recycling is embedded in the overall cost.
- *Julie Colehour* responds, clarifying that recycling is not free but that consumers think that it is, noting that this clarification will be included in the revised problem statement.
- *Penny Sweet* requests the problem statement be sent out in advance of future meetings.
- *Julie Colehour* confirms that the revised statement will be sent as early as possible and reminds everyone to review the statement after the meeting and provide comments by email.
- *Julie Colehour* asks the room if any details are missing from the problem statement.
 - *April Atwood* comments that source reduction is not included but is a part of the problem
 - *Janet Prichard* notes that cities are eager to meet the goal of 70% diversion and that the light weight of material and organics collected at the curbside is an increasing problem, noting a need to count down and continue measuring tonnage.



- *Stephanie Schwenger* requests additional data be provided on residual levels stipulated in contracts, China's specific contamination requirements, and backing up claims of increased contamination levels.
- *Julie Colehour* replies that *Meg Moorhead* and her team are working to compile this type of data that supports the problem statement.
- *Susan Fife-Ferris* requests that the "responsible" aspect of recycling in relation to the negative environmental effects of exporting be more specifically called out in the statement.
- *Lisa Sepanski* notes that there is some inclusion of environmental responsibility but that additional nuance will be incorporated.
- *Ken Marshall* points out that in the past week Vietnam, a secondary market, has stated that they will no longer accept mixed paper and mixed plastic either.
- *Andy Rheahme* raises the question of what to do in the instance that we do not meet the less than 0.5% contaminant limitations placed by China, noting that he'd like to include this conversation as an action item.
- *Julie Colehour* asks how many people in the room believe we will not meet the less than 0.5% contamination limit
- *Janet Prichard* states she is not certain we'll meet the less than 0.5% contamination limit
- *Joyce Nichols* highlights a contradiction in the short-term statement between the statement that "the life of cedar hills would only be shorted by 6 months" and another point that notes landfilling recycling may result in higher landfill costs sooner. *Joyce* requests additional data around the 6-month figure be provided in order to alleviate this conflict.
- *Meg Moorehead* replies, noting that she'll refer *Joyce* to data from the May MSWMAC meeting and that the 6-month figure is based on the assumption that it would take 5 years to figure out what to do with banned materials.
- *Joyce Nichols* replies, noting the shift in third world countries that are no longer taking what used to be considered recyclable and the possibility that these markets may never reopen, urging the need to focus on long-term disposal.
- *Julie Colehour* confirms that the two statements at conflict will be reviewed and made less at odds.
- *Susan Fife-Ferris* urges the need for long-term solutions for domestic processing, noting that while the problem statement talks about domestic markets, it does not address the structural aspects of how actual facilities will be brought to the area and what that means for the various players involved.
- *Ken Marshall* comments that China has continued to plan to build pulp mills in the United States in order to process materials here.
- *Susan Fife-Ferris* adds that it would be beneficial to understand what it would take politically and financially to make new policies that address the long-term problems.
- *Julie Colehour* wraps up, stating that the long-term problems will be discussed further in future task force meetings.

Action Items:

- **Revise problem statement:**
 - Add clarity that recycling is not free, but that consumers think it is
 - Include source reduction as a problem



- Provide additional data on residual levels stipulated in contracts, China's specific contamination requirements, and proof of increased contamination levels
- Revise statements about Cedar Hills to alleviate conflicting statements

Agenda Item #3: Responsible Recycling Task Force Meeting Schedule (*called to order at 9:31 am by Julie Colehour*)

Discussion:

- *Julie Colehour* reminds the room that meetings are structured around the Responsible Recycling framework:
 - A focus on the **Quality vs Quantity** of recyclables
 - Using consistent and **Harmonized Messaging** across the region
 - Prioritizing **Domestic Processing and Markets** for recyclables (also consider Social Justice and Environmental Impacts of export)
 - Creating domestic **Demand for Recycled Feedstock**
 - Accept that **Responsible Recycling is Not Free**
 - Shift to **Measure Real Recycling**
- The room confirms understanding of the structure
- *Julie Colehour* provides the following input on meeting topics:
 - June 1 meeting (today) to focus on quality vs. quantity and what goes in the blue bin as well as harmonized messaging and communications
 - June 18 meeting will focus on short-term items including contracts, waivers and surcharges
 - July – October meetings are mapped out to cover Fiber and Plastic Processing, Financing and Infrastructure, Creating Demand, Legislative and Policy Options, and Final Recommendations.
 - *Julie Colehour* notes that the last four meetings may adjust based on what makes most sense to focus on moving forward.
- *Penny Sweet* notes that packaging representation has previously been requested and asks if there will be representation at the meetings, specifying that she'd like to discuss how the task force can influence product stewardship.
- *Lisa Sepanski* replies that this will be added to the action items list and can be covered in August or September.
- *Jennifer Jessen* asks the room if there is any interest in looking into places to store material overflow in the short-term, which *Julie Colehour* adds to the "bike rack" list.
- *Sabrina Combs* asks if messaging for the public will be discussed and *Julie Colehour* confirms coverage in today's meeting.
- *Jeff Gaisford* asks the group how they'd like to come to closure or recommendations moving forward, noting that in SWAC and MSWMAC meetings they often revisit the meeting topic at the beginning of the next meeting to come to a final recommendation.
- The room affirms the desire to revisit meeting topics at the beginning of each meeting to come to a final recommendation.



- Additional comments from the room include:
 - *Ken Marshall* expresses concern that the conversation of “what’s in the bin” has been moved up but that there are still no tangible communications/messaging deliverables
 - *Meg Moorehead* replies, confirming that they are close to having messaging to provide
 - *Penny Sweet* suggests connecting with other groups around the country that are dealing with this issue, which *Julie Colehour* adds to the “bike rack”
 - *Joyce Nichols* provides input that Friday meetings are preferable over Monday meetings
 - *Jeff Gaisford* notes that meeting scheduling is based mostly on room availability
 - The following people offer up possible room space for future meetings
 - *Stephanie Schwenger and Joyce Nichols* – Bellevue
 - *Susan Fife-Ferris* – Seattle
 - *John MacGillivray* – Kirkland
 - *Sabrina Combs* – Bothell

Action Items:

- Revisit meeting topics at the beginning of each meeting to come to a final recommendation.
- Include representation from the packaging industry in conversations on EPR
- Look for alternate rooms for future meetings, aside from June 18
- Resend Task Force meeting schedule
- Schedule September and August meetings on a Friday

Bike Rack:

- Material overflow storage
- Connect with other groups across the country who are focusing on the same topic

Agenda Item #4: What’s in the Bin? (called to order at 9:44 am by Julie Colehour)

Discussion:

- *Julie Colehour* introduces the Commingled Work Group, which started in 2010-2012 with the goal of figuring out an ideal commingled recycling program for people and markets.
- *Lisa Sepanski* presents on the Commingled Work Group recommendations, first providing the following additional background on the group:
 - Effort led by the Department of Ecology to determine what materials can go into the bin and what materials cause problems
 - Southwest WA developed criteria first; Northwest WA was in the process of developing criteria when China Sword hit
- *Lisa Sepanski* notes that a statewide survey was conducted to identify the results and encourages the room to look at the criteria from a statewide perspective
- *Lisa Sepanski* explains the following criteria for what should go in the bin (YES), what should not go in the bin (NO) and what should be handled with caution (CAUTION)



- **YES materials:**
 - Paper
 - Corrugated cardboard
 - Plastic bottles and jugs
 - Metals
- **NO materials:**
 - Plastics bags and films
 - Shredded paper
 - Food-soiled fiber (including pizza boxes)
 - Wet cardboard and paper
 - *Penny Sweet* notes issue of rain and asks if the collection trucks are covered
 - *Ken Marshall* replies that materials are not covered while they are being dumped but that they are covered once compacted
 - Plastic cups, trays and clamshells
 - *Lisa Sepanski* notes that this could be a “caution” item but is on the “no” list currently as they are often contaminated with food and because they are considered a mixed plastic, therefore are restricted by China and would need to be sorted by resin type in order for them to be baled properly. Furthermore, clamshells are thin, get flattened by the MRF equipment and often get mixed in with paper bales.
 - Scrap metal, pots and pans and aluminum foil (never hangers!)
- **USE CAUTION:** ask your MRFs if they can handle these materials
 - Paper cartons, frozen food containers, aseptic containers
 - *Lisa Sepanski* explains these materials contain a layer of plastic and/or metal but often end up in paper bales where they are considered a contaminate. In order to be recycled, they need to be baled separately and sent to a paper mill that can separate the plastic and metal from the fiber.
 - Glass
 - *Lisa Sepanski* reminds the room that King County is fortunate to have a secondary sorting facility and market for glass where contaminants are removed and it is sorted by color. Glass particles abrade MRFs equipment and can be a worker safety issue.
 - *Penny Sweet* asks if glass should be recycled
 - *Lisa Sepanski* confirms that in King County, glass can be recycled
 - *Ken Marshall* comments that *Matt Stern* previously mentioned places like Oregon where they are looking into taking different types of recycling each week, suggesting that this may be the only way we can take all caution items
 - *Julie Colehour* adds *Ken’s* comment to the bike rack
 - *Tony Donati* asks if this is King County or Washington focused
 - *Lisa Sepanski* confirms that the BMPs are Washington focused
 - *Penny Sweet* requests getting this info to consumers be included in the conversation on messaging



- *Lisa Sepanski* confirms that this information will be used to create messaging that addresses King County
 - Mixed Plastics (#3 - #7)
 - *Lisa Sepanski* adds that #4, 5 and 6 have value and markets but would need to be separated by resin type, which could require MRF upgrades or a possible secondary processing facility
 - Non-bottle bulky rigid plastics
 - *Lisa Sepanski* explains that these materials are defined by size rather than resin type and are often sorted by hand
 - *Lisa Sepanski* wraps up the presentation, noting that these are the drafted recommendations and that next steps include review by a broader audience before sharing with the public
- *Julie Colehour* leads a discussion on the presentation, asking the room for:
 - General thoughts
 - Input on specific problem materials
 - What changes cities think are possible to the commingled program now and what support cities would need to make these changes
- *Sego Jackson* notes that a King County version of this lists is the endgame
- *Julie Colehour* affirms that the goal is for everyone to utilize the same set of rules that make sense for the whole system
- *Joan Nelson* comments that the haulers pushed Auburn to put plastic cups in the bin, noting that it's a challenge to navigate caution materials when the haulers and MRFs are all competing for the contract
- *Matt Stern* replies, stating that Waste Management would not be in the room if they didn't win the contract, highlighting that the challenge the China Sword disruption and figuring out how to build a system for the future. *Matt* continues, noting that after 30 years of recycling plastics that plastic industry has not stepped up to help to recycle low-grade plastics included in our programs.
- *Julie Colehour* reiterates *Joan's* comment, stating that the goal is to get everyone, both the cities, haulers and MRFs on the same page
- *Susan Fife-Ferris* urges that whatever we decide to take out cannot ever be added back in and that it is time for the recycling industry to deal with the decision made twenty years ago to export recyclables rather than build domestic infrastructure. *Susan* adds that she is on board with taking on the plastics industry and with EPR as a whole.
- *John MacGillivray* raises the question of whether it is possible to implement these recommendations, even if everyone agrees on them, noting that many cities do not have the autonomy needed to do so
- *Julie Colehour* suggests that China Sword may offer an opportunity to get everyone on the same page and make real changes
- *Lisa Sepanski* includes that Southwest Washington was able to make these types of decisions and affirms her belief that China Sword can help propel the change. *Lisa* also mentions that WSAC Solid Waste Managers Affiliates group is also using these recommendations as their baseline to understand what should and should not go in the bin and how to message to the public.
- *Janet Prichard* suggests that if the county says this is the definition of responsible recycling, it would give MRFs some political coverage and support to suggest to cities that they not include these materials
- *Penny Sweet* adds that she believes consistency is possible and that if cities are provided with the tools, they'll make sure they support the changes legislatively



- *Jeff Gaisford* suggests using removal of plastic bags as a way to provide the cities and the county with some experience as to how to best remove a material
- *Julie Colehour* asks the room to throw out some ideas for what they would like taken out. Ideas include:
 - flower pots
 - plastic bags and film
 - waxy paper, juice boxes, food cartons
- *Andy Rheume* asks why removal needs to be forever
- *Julie Colehour* replies stating that consumer confusion around what can and cannot go into the bin is already an issue and taking materials in and out would increase confusion, noting the need for long term commitment if we decide to take something out.
- *Stephanie Schwenger* suggests stating that in the current context these are the materials that should come out
- *Susan Fife-Ferris* affirms that need for long-term commitment in order to minimize consumer confusion
- *Linda Knight* agrees, noting the need to be cautious and also highlighting that some materials make sense for the commingled bin and others can possibly be dealt with using other solutions like the bag ban, etc.
- *Sabrina Combs* agrees on banning bags and also raises the questions as to why not ban at a county level. *Sabrina* also urges the need to differentiate between residential and commercial collection.
- *Michelle Metzler* comments that it's difficult to agree on a list at this time and asks what happens if markets come back? *Michelle* suggests that if we don't want to change the list, are there materials we can agree with landfilling in the short-term?
- *Janet Prichard* suggests discussing separately wrapped items like clothing and batteries later on as a bike rack item.
- *Ken Marshall* notes that contamination rates for multifamily collection has been huge for years and that eventually all of these materials will be contaminated because of that. *Ken* urges the need to figure out how to separate commercial and residential collection quickly.
- *Joyce Nichols* reiterates the complexity of communication with the public as people believe things in the blue bin get recycled and that explaining removal of materials due to China Sword is just one level of explanation. *Joyce* continued, noting that if they remove items from the bin they will get complaints and questions that are hard to explain if we don't start by telling consumers what's going on and why there are issues.
- *Julie Colehour* wraps up the discussion with a vote on materials that the room believes should be removed, reminding the room that the role of the task force will be to make these types of recommendations.
 - The room unanimously agrees to remove plastics bags and film
 - The room agrees to take out shredded paper with the added caution that message causes a huge issue
 - The room does not want to remove any other caution materials from the bin
- *Julie Colehour* reiterates that the original comments thrown out are not being considered, but that recommendations to remove bags and shredded paper will be added to the final outcome report.
- *Tony Donati* and *Susan Fife-Ferris* point out the need to move up stream and make sure that products made are recyclable

Action Items:



- Send out the next version of the Commingled Work Group Recommendations (anticipated in June)
- Recommend removing plastic bags and films from the commingled bin
- Recommend removing shredded paper from the bin, as long as messaging surrounding the removal is agreed upon

Bike Rack:

- Discuss collection of different materials each week, similar to what Oregon is talking about
- Discuss placing separately wrapped items, like clothing and batteries, on top of the blue bin

Agenda Item #5: Communication Updates (*called to order at 10:35 by Kim van Ekstrom*)

Presentation:

- *Kim van Ekstrom* introduces herself, and noted that Matt Manguso, will be leading the communication efforts going forward
- *Kim van Ekstrom* provides the following background on the group:
 - Harmonized communication and messaging efforts started before the Task Force
 - The group was formed as an ad hoc communication consortium in order to identify messaging around recycling right under current conditions
 - The main purpose of the consortium is to support policy direction and messaging
- *Kim van Ekstrom* notes that the consortium is developing a campaign to provide consistent messaging on recycling right and that they plan to produce:
 - Toolkit that provides cities with consistent and specific messages to share with the media
 - Messaging translated in multiple languages
 - A guide to recycling that includes tips to help cities handle changing criteria
 - Consistent website updates
 - Proactive and strategic communication with news outlets
 - Ad buys
- *Kim van Ekstrom* provides the consortiums planned next steps:
 - Assign various tasks to the consortium members
 - Collaborate with haulers to ensure consistent messaging
 - Identify where resources for ad buys will come from
- *Kim van Ekstrom* shares a slide showing the current consortium members:
 - **Gerty Coville**, Project Manager, King County Solid Waste Division
 - **Becca Fong**, Solid Waste Communications and Outreach, Seattle Public Utilities
 - **Matt Manguso**, Communication Specialist, King County Solid Waste Division
 - **Michael May**, Public Information Officer, Bellevue Utilities
 - **Stephanie Schwenger**, Solid Waste Program Administrator, Bellevue Utilities
 - **Lisa Sepanski**, Project Manager, King County Solid Waste Division



- *Kim van Ekstrom* notes that in addition to messaging around recycling right, the consortium will also focus on messaging to consumers around how to think about buying products and messaging that stresses to consumers that recycling is changing.

Discussion:

- *Andy Rheume* suggests working with the smaller cities as well, which *Kim* agrees to
- *Susan Fife-Ferris* asks what the timeline for delivery looks like
- *Kim van Ekstrom* replies, stating that there is no timeline yet but that they will identify next steps, timeline and a workplan in the next consortium meeting, taking place next week
- *Sego Jackson* notes that people are already adopting “clean, dry, and empty” by wiping down their materials before recycling, which is not what the phrase refers to, noting this as a reminder to be very specific in how we define messaging.
- *Stephanie Schwenger* provides additional context, stating that the cities included in the effort are those cities that came forward originally
- *Andy Rheume* replies, stating he thinks it’s important to include the smaller cities in the instance that they are asked for money
- *Jeff Gaisford* affirms that King County Solid Waste Division has resources set aside that they plan to spend on messaging and that they are looking to the cities for help spreading the word to their communities through email campaigns, etc.
- *Kim van Ekstrom* notes that Seattle, King County and Bellevue have said they have some resources and that they are simply looking to other jurisdictions to promote the messaging to their constituencies
- *Ken Marshall* asks if messaging will include why the changes are happening, specifically in relation to China Sword, which *Kim* affirms

Action Items:

- Involve smaller cities in the messaging conversation
- Share messaging timeline with the Task Force once ready

Agenda Item #6: Action Items & Wrap Up (called to order at 10:50 am by Julie Colehour)

Discussion:

- *Julie Colehour* reviews the following next steps from today’s meeting:
 - Send out meeting minutes to the Task Force for review before sharing with the public
 - Ask for approval of meeting minutes at the beginning of the next meeting
 - Begin building a recommendations document to review at the beginning of the next meeting
 - Email *Colette Marien* with feedback on the problem statement by end-of-day June 13
- *Janet Prichard* asks if solid waste consultants will be invited to the next meeting on contracts, which *Jeff Gaisford* affirms
- *Any Rheume* requests that the presentation be sent to the group



- *Jeff Gaisford* notes that we will keep that same location and time for the June 18 meeting, but will look to move the meetings elsewhere beginning in July.

Action Items:

- Send presentation to the group
- Look for new locations for meetings beginning in July