

**SPU Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC)**



October 2, 2024, Meeting Summary  
5:30 am – 7:30 am

*Chair: Aleema Gray  
Co-Chair: Joe Camero  
Secretary: Caitlin Singer*

<b>Committee Members</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>SPU Staff /Guests</b>	<b>Role</b>
Joe Camero	Y	Casey Colley	SPU – SWAC Program Coordinator
Melanie Cover	Y	Stephanie Schwenger	SPU- Planning, Performance & Analytics Manager
Tareq Fayyad	N	Veronica Fincher	SPU- Waste Prevention Planning and Grants
Aleema Gray	Y	Fatima Krubally	SPU- Administrative Staff Analyst
Caitlin Singer	Y	Katie Jerauld	Guest-Ecology
Wendy Weiker	N	Katie Swanson	SPU – Solid Waste Lead Planner
Lisa Watkins	Y		
Alissa Campbell	Y		
Shelly Crocker	N		
Erin Gagnon	N		
Paige Madden	N		
Chelsey Evans	Y		
Yongkang (YK) Zhou	Y		
Karia Wong	Y		

**1. Welcome & Introductions**

- The meeting commenced at 5:30 pm, with members, staff, and guests introducing themselves, stating their organization affiliation, and an Icebreaker.

**2. SPU Updates (Jeff Fowler)**

- Glass recycling
  - Issues with Ardagh temporary closure
  - Other plants across the country have closed and re-opened, giving hope that Ardagh will re-open
  - They were the one processors turning recycled glass into bottles
  - Right now, SPU is directing glass to SMI to sort and clean
  - Storing clean glass at the old South Transfer Facility
  - Customers should continue to recycle glass in recycling bins
- Operations

- Contracted to replace two compactors to replace at North Transfer Station next year
- Starting to fail/at end of life
- Both transfer stations have a wear-in floor – a concrete floor that's sacrificial
- At the south, will be replaced in August 2025. I am still trying to figure out how to redirect traffic when half of the station will be disrupted
- At Old South Transfer Station - starting deconstruction in start in 2026
- Odor Study at North Transfer Station
  - Complaints from the neighborhood about odor
  - An odor study was done by Jacobs (?) over two seasons to identify sources and solutions.
  - Possible solutions: air curtains and boosting the air system to have a negative draw on the building.
  - Already have rapid-close doors, but so much traffic it pretty much stays open
- Melanie asks if there are incentives to make design more sustainable?
  - Incentives in place, indeed. Not at that phase of design yet.
- Do those incentives usually make it to the final design?
  - Depends on project.
- Aleema suggests a Next Cycle - an organization that has IP for wine bottle recycling
  - Revino ([revinobottles.com](http://revinobottles.com))
- Is there a regulation in place regarding importing cheap glass?
  - Unclear.

### 3. Review and Approve September Meeting Notes (Aleema Gray)

- Approve (7)
  - Aleema
  - Joe
  - Melanie
  - Katie
  - Lisa
  - Caitlin
  - Chelsea
- Nay/Abstain (0)

### 4. Input into Waste Prevention Planning (cont'd) (Veronica Fincher)

Agenda:

- Recap from the Sep 4 meeting
- What we're doing with SWAC input
- Continuing Sep 4 discussion
- Opportunities for future engagement

What we're doing with SWAC input

- Is SPU on the right track?
- Are we missing anything?
- Decisions on:
  - Waste prevention triple bottom line goal
  - Show we measure success
  - Values to guide how we implement the goals

- Potential SPU roles in waste prevention
- Criteria for prioritizing waste prevention programs and policies

Continue the Sep 4 discussion

- Goal: Make it easier
  - SPU makes it easy for people to reuse, repair, and share material resources through services and tools and communicate realistic expectations to connect further and empower communities.
- Goal: Value
  - Decentralize waste prevention.

Questions from the 9/4 discussion: Imagine a future world where waste prevention = our way of life?

Suggestions from SWAC

- Waste prevention is easy and convenient
- More options (tool libraries, reusables at transfer stations)
- It is easy to know your options (such as where to send packaging for reuse and education in ways people can understand)
- Circulating materials at the micro-community level (community-based resilience, resilient ecosystem, local supply chains)
- Corporate social responsibility (CSR)
- Less single use
- Don't have to choose - your options are already the best. The default option is the best.
- More quality, durable products
- Producers are held accountable - community/society makes them take responsibility, and individuals feel empowered in their ability to influence businesses
- Plan for reduced reuse (cognizant of how market change can affect end products)
- Equity - ties across ease/convenience and CSR

**New suggestions:**

- Waste prevention is not separate from market products
- Enabling factors - what conditions make this future possible?
  - Incentives or other levers to incentivize businesses to want to align with goals
- Consume less, less single-use, more durable. Or NO single use.
- Positive angles, e.g., job creation/opportunities, skill creation, community-creation
- Highlight what currently works in the system and build on those systems. Don't recreate the wheel. There is a recycling system in place to acknowledge the positives and learn from them.
- Targeting attitudes and behavioral change - respect for resources and ecosystems
- Make it a structural change - targeting corporations and who they are responsible to (stakeholders, board members, consumers)
- Storytelling - we don't do it well enough in the context of sustainability and climate change - how do we make people understand and feel something about an issue
- Hyper local economy - Zone of Zero Waste, e.g., Buy Nothing communities

- Storytelling surrounding this, artists-in-residence = storytellers
  - Social events/experiments, e.g., one week of not buying anything
  - Glass Bottle Challenge - only generate as much waste as fits in a glass bottle
- Context: there is a network of waste prevention and SPU is trying to figure out their role
- How are communities benefiting from the utopian zero-waste future?
- Community-building/connection - to neighbors, items. Everything is less anonymous.
- Stress reduction - less overwhelmed by choice. The system is set up to be more straightforward (default = best option)
- Opportunities moving forward for engagement
- Nov 2024 - get input on the development of prioritization criteria and process and report back on progress and incorporating SWAC input so far
- Priorities for 2025
  - Q2-3 2025 (tentative)
    - Participation in the prioritization process
  - Q3-4 2025 (tentative)
    - Review of draft WP Strategic Plan and Action Plan
- Action item: Contact Veronica about whether we want her to come in November and/or Q1.

## 5. Solid Waste Metrics and Targets (Stephanie Schwenger)

Finish review of new metrics and targets

From Sep 4:

- Waste Prevention
- Elevating metric of self-haul disposal - trending in the wrong direction
- Accounted for the same amount of disposal as the commercial sector (1/3 of all waste)
- Responsible recycling
- How to get better at measuring recycling by focusing on capture rates rather than the total amount recycled

SWAC to complete a questionnaire regarding new metrics and targets

- Focus Area #3: Food Waste Reduction
- Reduce food waste in the garbage through prevention and composting
- Latest waste composition studies (WCS) to categorize what is going where
  - Results: food is the largest share of commercial and residential streams (by weight) - about 20% of combined multi-fam, single-fam, and commercial garbage
  - Disproportionately large environmental (food responsible for about 60% of methane emissions) and social impact (climate/environmental justice)
- Metric: daily pounds of residential food waste generated per capita
  - Easily interpreted
  - Highlights the role that every Seattle resident plays in preventing food waste
  - Consistent with Seattle's Food Action Plan Goal #4 to prevent food waste and climate pollution
- Metric: annual tons of food waste disposed of (residential + commercial)
  - One of the best areas of opportunity where SPU can make an impact
  - Consistent with Seattle's Food Action Plan Goal #4 to prevent food waste and climate pollution
  - The amount of food waste is decreasing. ~50,000 tons in 2020.

- Wasted food is often edible - could have gone to helping address food insecurity
- Focus Area #4: Contamination reduction (b/w streams)
- "contaminants" - any item put in the recycling that does not meet Seattle's recycling program requirements
- Metric: Residential recycling contamination rate (%)
  - Measure success in improving the quality of the recycling stream
  - Contamination rate flat from 2015 to 2020 (~10%)
  - Are we improving the recycling stream, or is it getting worse?
    - Getting worse, though nationally, our numbers look incredible.
- How much contamination is "wishcycling" versus ignorance/indifference?
  - Very hard to say.
- Could this metric be solved by just allowing everything to be recycled? No contaminants if everything is acceptable? Yeah!
  - How can we counter this metric with another one to improve recycling?
  - Tries to operate with some level of integrity. Another focus area is responsible recycling, going to responsible end markets, not polluting elsewhere, etc.
  - Working on how to obtain better data on end markets - where do these items go?
- This is dictated by what has an end stream.
- Speaking to Veronica's circular economy utopia too: transparency of end markets, high capture rate
- One challenge for immigrants is unfamiliar with what goes in what bins. They are doing education. Longer lists = more challenging (and people start to get avoidant)
  - Other countries do separate streams rather than combined streams
  - Single stream – a big driver to do this is collection efficiency. Improved recycling rates because it made it easier for the consumer.
- Focus Area #5: Compliance
- Increase compliance with high-impact solid waste code, Director's Rules and contract requirements.
- Metric: construction and demolition Waste Diversion Report compliance rate
  - These reports are a good proxy measure of success in improving the quality of the recycling stream
  - CDL permits in compliance - currently around 60-70%
  - Better compliance, better data we have this recycling stream
- Metric: missed collections per 1,000 pick-ups
  - No more than one (1) miss per 1,000 pick-ups (<0.1%)
  - Measure of service reliability
  - There are significant differences in reliability for single-family and multi-family
    - I want to elevate this to highlight inequities b/w SF and MF
- Action item for SWAC members - finished survey

## 6. 2023 Waste Prevention & Recycling Report - Draft Results (Katie Swanson)

- Preliminary results
- Review process and timeline for SWAC comments

### Agenda

- About the Annual Report (AR) and SWAC's role
- Policy actions and waste prevention highlights

- Top results - MSW and C&D
- Next steps
- Questions
  
- Fun fact: Seattle began city-wide mandatory food waste composting in 2015
- 1989 - yard waste mandatory composting
- Annual Report and SWAC's role
- Overview
  - Highlights key tonnage results and trends
  - Normally, due to the city council's 10/1
- SWAC's role
  - Reviews and comments on results in the AR, typically in a letter to the City Council
  - Role as secretary = this letter
  - Have historical SWAC comment letters on the SPU website
- Formerly known as Recycling Rate Report
- 2023 Policy actions and waste prevention highlights
- State legislation - bills 5144 and 1085 WRAP Act
- Top Results Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) Generation
- Generation = total disposed of, recycled, composted streams
- Sectors = residential [single- and multi-family], commercial, self-haul
- Overall waste generation inched upward post-covid, on par with pre-pandemic levels
- Key takeaway: MSW generation has continued to grow post-covid. 2023 back on par with 2018 and 2019 levels
- Chart showing generation by stream (disposed, recycled, composted)
  - Disposal held steady
  - Increase in generation from recycling and compost streams (though a modest increase. Like 2%)
- By sector – a substantial increase in the commercial sector (22k ton increase)
  - The RES sector total declined by ~10k tons (single + multi-family)
  - Omits C&D
- Change in MSW generation from 2022 to 2023
  - Commercial recycling and composting account for the majority of the increase; all three SF streams decreased
  - Self-haul responsible for largest single increase b/w '22-'23
- Commercial sector = 45.7% of overall generated MSW
- Single-fam 26.3% of overall generated MSW
- MF 11.1% of overall generated MSW
- Self-haul 16.9% of overall generated MSW
- Per capita residential (single + multi-family) MSW generation decreased
  - Target = 2.5 pounds per person per day
  - Met this target every year since 2014
  - Target will change to reduce per capita rates by 15% from 2015 by 2030
    - Aligned with a lot of other global climate commitments
  - Increase because adding commercial and self-haul sectors (except C&D)
- MSW Disposal (just garbage) Key Results
  - Disposed tons held steady from 2022 to 2023
  - Landfilled ~360,000 tons

- Split evenly b/w res, com, and self-haul
- Self-haul disposal = highest it's ever been in the last 25 years or so
- Share of MSW disposal by sector
  - Res and com remaining steady, self-haul rising
- In 2023, conducted a self-haul garbage stream composition study
  - 2/3 of self-haul (68k tons) was recoverable
  - Most common materials: C&D; furniture, appliances and electronics; plastics
  - Of the C&D material, 25% banned from disposal in Seattle
  - SPU conducting an evaluation
- Per capita residential MSW disposal
  - Decreased slightly
  - Single-family disposal is declining
  - 0.88lb/person/day
  - Target: 1lb/person/day - have been below this since 2015
- Key results: C&D
  - Overall C&D debris generation decreased again
  - Peaked in 2020 and gradually dropped since
  - Cooling off in construction activity and permits issued
  - The commercial sector generated more tons overall than C&D for the first time since 2010
- Next steps for SWAC
- October - receive and review the draft report
- Oct/early Nov - review and develop comment letter (Caitlin)
- 11/6 next SWAC meeting
- 11/15 Submit draft comment letter to SPU for review
- 11/26 - finalized comment letter
- 12/4 - send final comment letter to city council after SPU submits final report
- Action item - Communicate draft letter timeline
- Ready for review next week
- HW before next SWAC meeting - start a Google doc
- Discuss in the meeting with informed members
- Compiling feedback for submittal
- Working in Google doc
- What kinds of comments?
- We are providing comments and constructive feedback to SPU

## 7. **Around the Table Community insights and comments regarding solid waste.**

### SWAC Comments

- Announcements and events sharing
  - Ecology will be hosting regional summits to prioritize organic material management goals (Katie from Ecology). The May 1 Summit will be in Everett.
  - Grant opp to tribes, communities, and communities - (Katie from Ecology) Katie to email Casey
  - Clear Alleys Program (CAP) alleys in CID
  - Around 2015, alleys were unsafe/unsanitary
  - Cleans capes brought about a bag program to replace dumpsters and carts in alleys to reduce this problem by reducing access and activities in alleys
  - Still happening in Pioneer Square, CID, downtown Seattle, a portion of U-District

- Has received some criticisms and comments from small business owners b/c of low pick-up frequency. Overnight breaking into bags by houseless people, animals. Bags end up scattered. Becomes an issue for residents and commercial owners. Some want carts back.
- Complicated issue.
- CA Governor signed SB 707 into law - Textile Recovery Act
- First of its kind for textile recovery takeback/circularity
- Cans not being recycled
- Maybe it's not a problem in WA?
- Aluminum is a highly valued commodity
- If there is a non-metal component in aluminum, it could potentially degrade the quality of the final commodity
- A lot of this messaging was happening in China's import ban in 2018