

Washtenaw County
Materials Management Planning Committee (MMPC)
Meeting Minutes

4/9/2025, 10:00 AM

Washtenaw County Learning Resource Center
4135 Washtenaw Ave., Ann Arbor, 48108

Members Present: Seegert, Mazanec, Bukowski, Kerkez, Ohren, Maciejewski, Reeve, Nicholson, Williams, Hwang, Mason (ex-officio)

Members Absent: Ukena, Drinan (ex-officio), Cornell

Washtenaw County Staff Present: Eggermont, Wright

Resource Recycling Staff Present: Heflin, Naud, Oulton (virtual), Wouters (virtual)

Call to order: Chair Ohren called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

Roll Call

- a. David Seegert – present
- b. Paul Mazanec – present
- c. Todd Bukowski (Vice Chair) - present
- d. Bryan Ukena – absent
- e. Lindsey Kerkez – present
- f. Joseph Ohren (Chair) - present
- g. Jennifer Cornell- absent
- h. Jason Maciejewski – present
- i. Bruce Reeve - present
- j. James Nicholson – present
- k. Marc Williams – present
- l. Roland Hwang – present
- m. Sarah Mason (ex-officio) – present
- n. David Drinan (ex-officio) – absent

Land Acknowledgement (read by Wright)

Swearing in of Roland Hwang

Roland Hwang took the oath of office.

Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda moved by Nicholson, seconded by Reeve. All in favor.
Motion carries.

Last Meeting Minutes Approval

Motion to approve the 3/12/2025 Meeting Minutes moved by Bukowski, seconded by Nicholson. All in favor. Motion carries.

Amendment requested to correct meeting reschedule date.

Nicholson moved to amend the minutes, Maciejewski seconded. All in favor. Amendment carries.

Feedback from MMPC Input Form

Heflin reviewed the feedback from Committee members on goals and vision for the materials management plan.

Input on Goals:

- Access to data and developing a shared understanding of key definitions.
- Ensuring siting requirements are met.
- Understanding recycling capture rate.
- Maximizing current infrastructure.
- Setting specific recycling goals per commodity and reuse / refill.
- Measuring deposit return system collection.
- Ensuring long-term, sustainable funding.
- Advocating for extended producer responsibility at the state level, and other policies.
- Utilizing EGLE's Annual Report on Solid Waste Landfilled in Michigan.
- Accounting for C&D and GHGs in the plan.
- Harmonizing accepted recyclables at MRFs across the County.
- Educating consumers on programs.

Input of Vision included:

- Coming up with a clear definition of “zero waste”
- Adding “and circular economy practices” to the vision statement

Recycling Goals Overview

Naud reviewed the proposed County recycling goals created at a previous meeting. Naud asked members to chime into the proposed goals.

Residential Curbside and Dropoff Recycling Discussion

Challenges and barriers you face?

Marc Williams - Western Washtenaw Recycling Authority (WWRA)

Williams shared a summary of what WWRA does, including their collection of recyclables at drop off sites and curbside collection in Chelsea. Williams shared challenges including unstaffed drop off stations, people dumping unaccepted material, the fluctuation of commodity pricing when most their revenue comes from product sales, and the cost of equipment maintenance. WWRA's largest cost is the equipment and processing of material. Williams reviewed residential challenges for curbside collection including the lack of available data, identifying the most efficient collection routes, and educating

residents on proper sorting.

Williams responded to questions about the drop-off recycling sites including the infrastructure, accepted items, and how materials get sorted. WWRA has separate collection for glass and that reduces contamination from glass. Williams shared that they accept waste oil. Williams noted textiles and film are common contaminants.

Sarah Mason – City of Ann Arbor

Mason shared some of the City of Ann Arbor's challenges in the residential recycling space. Wishcycling is an issue, which is when people put items in their recycling bin that they hope or "wish" will be recycled without knowing if they are accepted items. Education is something communities must stay consistent with. The City of Ann Arbor had a successful campaign "All Together Now" many years ago, but the accepted materials have changed since then. Re-education is a challenge, especially with changes in packaging. The City focuses on consistent recyclables and points residents to the website for harder to recycle materials. The number one contaminant is bagged recyclables.

The Committee discussed end markets for recyclables, including the uncertainty of market fluctuations for commodity values and if specific materials are typically more profitable than others. Mason noted that Recycle Ann Arbor (RAA) markets the material at the Materials Recovery Facility in Ann Arbor and added that it is more useful to look at a long-term average of commodity prices to understand the value of specific commodities.

The Committee discussed additional challenges including polypropylene education, different curbside collection models, securing sustainable end-markets, and hard-to-recycle items like styrofoam and lithium batteries.

What enables and allows you to be successful?

Mason shared that the education, commitment, and culture of recycling in Ann Arbor is impressive and helps the city be successful. The relationship that Ann Arbor has with RAA is a strong partnership. Ann Arbor has a solid waste millage that funds all their solid waste efforts. Naud mentioned that there is a Public Act that allows cities to collect mills based on property tax to fund solid waste management.

Williams shared that some of WWRA's funding comes from a special assessment, \$31 for drop off access and curbside is \$53 per parcel. The County helped WWRA with an infrastructure grant that paid for a new collection truck and a grant from The Recycling Partnership (TRP) for education. Participation of residents is also a key component to success.

The Committee discussed the pros and cons of drop-off recycling versus curbside recycling. Williams shared that in high density population areas curbside recycling is more efficient. Seegert noted that Washtenaw County has a lot of rural areas which can be a challenge because trucks have to travel long distances between households, so drop-off recycling works well for these areas.

What opportunities do you see and what would be the role of the county to enable these opportunities?

Eggermont shared that the County can create a special assessment under Public Act 185 to fund certain things provided there is authorization from participating municipalities.

Williams shared that the grant assistance has been very helpful for WWRA. Williams suggested that a joint list of outlets for recyclable materials would be helpful. Mason noted that there is opportunity for County-wide education, especially for standard recyclables. Naud mentioned there are public acts that exist that give counties authority to raise funds for education and county wide programs. Williams shared that WWRA has seen success targeting their education to schools and youth.

Mazanec noted that subscription service is not an efficient way to provide service and advocated for hauler contracts by community. Naud mentioned that the County is working on templates for townships to pass ordinances and seek bids to allow for competitive contracts with single haulers. Naud shared the benefits of regions working collectively, giving the example of Dexter Township bidding for a single hauler and they want to bring in neighboring townships. Naud also added that some communities work together with Memorandums Of Understandings without regional authorities. Reeve noted that it would be an easier decision for a township to make if the county organized the RFP and then brought that to the municipalities. Eggermont replied that haulers would not bid on something without knowing what townships would be participating as population density and number of households included would determine the pricing.

Kerkez shared that SEMCOG is across a 7-county region and will be working on an education campaign to educate elected officials on the materials management planning process. They will be doing tours and taking videos, interviews, etc.

Bukowski asked if there is a benefit if RAA and WWRA combine materials for end markets. Williams replied that there could be potential for that - the transparency on outlets helps everyone to have more opportunity to collect material for recycling.

Naud mentioned the need to discuss pre-emption where the state legislature has removed the ability of local governments to regulate plastic bags and other to-go packaging.

WRRMA member additions

Eggermont invited the Washtenaw Regional Resource Management Authority (WRRMA) members to introduce themselves. Carlene Colvin-Garcia from Ann Arbor Charter Township shared with the Committee that WRRMA did a recycling audit with materials from seven of their member communities and received resident feedback through a survey. Eggermont noted that WRRMA, through a TRP grant, was able to reduce contamination by 40%.

Recycling Best Practices

Naud presented slides about different recycling program structures and best practices of recycling. These included: hub and spoke model, opt in vs. opt out, curbside collection, variable pricing, recycling drop-off site best practices, and education and outreach. Carts, opt-out systems, variable pricing, and continual education lead to the highest amount of recycling.

Washtenaw County will make all slides accessible to Committee members and the public on their website, including today's recycling best practices slides.

Next Steps

Naud shared the topics we will review in the coming months. Ohren asked about construction and demolition waste. Egremont replied that this will be in the special materials section.

Future Meetings Schedule

Next meeting May 21, 2025, at 10:00am at MSU Extension Classroom 705 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI.

Public Comment

Jen Markarski – Northville Township

Echoed comments about educating young people. Advocated for education in schools as well as social media. Shared an example about the difficulty she faced when she had to dispose of tanning bed lightbulbs that were left behind in her home when she moved in.

Josh Kofflin - City of Milan

Advocated for more grants and opportunities for recycling in Milan.

Leslie Black - Lodi Township

Asked about opportunities for giving feedback as a community member. Mentioned she is in the part of the township where they have subscription service.

Meeting adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting moved by Hwang, seconded by Mazanec. Meeting adjourned at 11:33 a.m.

Approved by:  (Chair)

(Vice Chair)