



Meeting Report: Organics Recycling in the Capital District

Meeting Date: April 9, 2014

Attendees: Green Island: Mayor McNulty-Ryan, Sean Ward; Troy: Bill Dunne, Bill Chamberlain; Watervliet: Mark Gleason; Cohoes: Barbara Decker; CDRPC: Todd Fabozzi; VHB: Angela Vincent; CAA: Jim Yienger, Dazzle Ekblad; Empire Zero Waste: Tyler Holloway

Agenda: The group met to discuss barriers and opportunities to introducing organics recycling as a municipal service in the Capital District, and the potential for regional collaboration.

Immediate Outcomes and Next Steps:

- Troy will explore a residential curbside pilot program with a collection vendor such as Empire Zero operating in selected neighborhoods such as Miami Beach Estates and Emerald Greens. Part of the goal will be to study if savings from tipping fees will cover the cost of collections.
- Watervliet & Green Island agreed to work together to implement a municipally-run pilot collection program in Green Island, and to have the organics collected processed in Watervliet's digester or at its compost site.
- Empire Zero agreed to provide information on potential vendors for specialty collection vehicles to both Watervliet and Troy.
- Group agreed continue collaboration and meet on an ongoing basis to explore shared services, and to get more communities involved. The CDRPC/CSC team will continue to facilitate this group.
- The group agreed to continue to look for resources to expand and implement the IOWI proposal to expand composting and anaerobic digestion in the region, and agreed to evaluate funding opportunities in the next CFA.

NOTICE: CFA released on May 1st. Proposals due June 16th (for CGC).

The next round of the CFA has been released May 1st and it contains a variety of funding that maybe of interest to Climate Smart Communities. The Cleaner Greener Communities (CGC) program contains funding for both planning activities and project implementation. This may support organic waste management and planning for this group. The funding can also be applied to other Climate Smart Community-related projects in each individual community.

Research Needs

The group identified some initial needs that could be addressed through a regional organics waste plan:

- A map of existing and potential composting sites in the area, keeping in mind that some empty lots may be contaminated.
- An understanding on how to manage compost quality and contamination; Troy noted that it advises residents not to use the yard waste compost it creates in vegetable gardens because it cannot guarantee quality of the compost. To what extent does the same issue exist for food waste?
- Better data on the timeframes and the likely rate of acceptance of the practice; do the uptake curves look like those for conventional recycling?
- A more detailed understanding of what other communities in the Capital District are doing in terms of organics recycling.
- Better data on the costs and benefits; does organics recycling save enough from reduced tipping fees to justify collection?
- What can be done to help people get used to separating out organic waste from other materials? Watervliet reports 100 housing units are participating in its pilot, but there is still a long way to go. Are there examples of successful public education campaigns that show residents how easy and hygienic it can be to separate food waste and store it before collection?

Engagement with Schools

All participants felt strongly that public outreach and training at school districts offer a good opportunity for composting and/or collection of organics for bio-digestion. Large amounts of food waste are still being sent to landfills, and composting is a good opportunity to engage students in the process, and to bring the message of organics recycling home.

