



City of Lowell – Sustainability Council

Lowell Sustainability Council

Agenda

January 22nd 6:30 PM

DPW Conference Room, 1365 Middlesex St

Lowell, MA 01852

Live & via Zoom Meeting:

<https://lowellma.zoom.us/j/87878611016?pwd=S1ViM0VPNUN1NG9uZ2QzYjMrQi9xZz>

09 Meeting ID: 878 7861 1016

Passcode: 604786

Optional dial-in number: +1 646 558 8656

In order to be admitted to the Zoom meeting, please RSVP to Katherine

Moses (kmoses@lowellma.gov) by 4:30 PM on 1/21/2026

Attendance:

Mikaela Hondros-McCarthy, Bryan Molinari, Williana Aquino, Billy LeFebvre, Ryan Oates, Jay Tobin, Chris Sullivan,

I. Minutes for Approval

October 23rd, 2025

Motion to approve: AC

Second: Ryan

Motion carried.

II. Continued Business

a) Chris Sullivan from Solid Waste and Recycling presents to LSC

- Grant
- DEP was a huge value.
- LSC is part of a g
- LSC put together a contract that was favorable to Lowell. Lowell's contract is the framework for other towns.
- Things to have in the contracts:
 - Missed pickups. LSC wanted to have firm language in the contract to make sure companies could be held accountable for missed pickups.
 - A few years ago, there were many missed yard waste. That was partly because of turnover at Waste Management.
 - We now have a requirement that a certain number of trucks are in use at any given time.
 - Artificial Intelligence – AI. - Third Eye creates an “event” – a video recording – of each pickup. Identifies the situation as “missed pick-up,” “blocked,” “not out.”

- Did a model of this process at a Neighborhood subcommittee to provide clarity for both neighbors and for Waste Management.
- “We’re the frontrunners.”
- Eventually, we will be able to use cameras to identify contamination. To catch people who put garbage at the bottom of their recycling.
- Waste Management has historically collaborated with law enforcement to help identify if someone had been making 3D printed weapons. Checked his garbage can alone.
- We added a truck to the bulk route. Now, there are two trucks so bulk items can be picked up more frequently.
- We just got enough interest for “Citizens for Black Earth” – a compost company.
 - Starts with public schools. Composting in the back of house. Not students yet.
 - There will be a curbside compost route starting in March. \$20 per month. We have 300 people interested. 150 signed up. You get a free bag of soil if you sign up. They deliver it to you.
 - By 2030, DEP is making it mandatory that everyone compost by 2030. It would likely be \$3 million per year. The question becomes how do you pay for that.
 - Second phase in schools - the goal is to have a cart go out to compost. Starts at STEM high school as a pilot. Then do it across the system.
 - Billy: In UMass Lowell’s kitchen,, they scoop extra food into a slurry of water into a machine to compost it right then and there.
 - Chris called it an “Anaerobic digestion machine” food goes in, it gets compressed, dehydrated pellets come out. These chips have a lot of nutrients. Good for gardens. Machines cost \$100,000.
 - Greater Lawrence has large anaerobic digesters that produce energy.
- There is a curbside textile company now. CMRK. Clothing. Go to the Lowell website. Call to schedule textile pickup.
- Expanded recycling after hours on Tuesday nights.
- AC: Question about outreach.
 - Post things all over. Social media. City website. Meta advertisements in the zip codes. Deandre at City Hall often posts on Social Media.

- Re-sending mailers from 2023. It costs about \$5,000. We are going to put it on the website as well.
- Recycling app.
- Mikaela: LSC can help with outreach. We could table with the new flyer.
 - Chris: We are distributing through neighborhood subcommittees.
- Billy: There could be a community advocate.
 - Mikaela: could we put information on the bins about what to put in or not. Signs saying “don’t bag your recycling”
 - Multilingual volunteers to spread the word.
 - UMass Lowell - Moloney internship program
- Enforcement
 - We have a full time enforcement agent. Issues 1300 tickets a year. Flips 300-400 recycling lids per day. It’s effective.
 - Waste Management was given the authority to reject contamination if it is visual from the curb.
 - 24ish down 17ish percent from March of 2024.
 - DPD allows a certain amount. 10% or lower is acceptable.
 - Audit again this monday. Things are getting a lot cleaner, and we are hoping for a good score this year.
- Yard Waste
 - Waste Management doesn’t want to deal with yard waste. It is challenging because everyone does it at once. Yard waste goes to a farm in Tewksbury.
- Multi-family
 - We only serve six units and down. Bigger than that and they privately contract.
 - Private hauling companies will fine the landlord. Landlords have a very difficult time getting people to recycle. This makes landlords less likely to do recycling.
- Final destination of trash
 - Burned at WIN near the highway. Used to make steam to produce energy.
 - In the contract now, there is a Back-up plan - every now and then when there are scheduled or nonscheduled outages, if running into wait times, we can show up first thing - 6:30am.
 - Second dump of the day at noon. If there is more than a 1 hour 15 minute wait, there is a facility in Leominster where they can dump. Another location after that.

- They do 8500 stops per day.
- Negotiated tonnage to \$82.05 per ton, while other towns often pay \$110.
- Landfills are slowly dying. One out of four trucks on the road is full of trash.
- The best thing to do is waste to energy. But it's expensive.
- Bins are getting fixed very quickly. Helps with rats.
- Billy: Are there plans to reduce litter?
 - Designated truck for park barrels.
 - Designated truck for illegal dumping.
 - Brad Bittenheys of the Lowell Litter Krewe - makes a pile so it can be easily picked up.
- They may put chips in containers so they could be tracked.
- Partnering with a company called Change is Simple. Go to elementary schools. 8 instructors go into classrooms and teach kids how to compost. Like Bill Nye the Science Guy for Composting. Grant money pays for it. The goal is when you teach children at that age, they bring it home and teach their parents.
 - Happening March 10th.
- Billy: Are we messaging these successes? Local news.
 - Chris did an informational meeting with subcommittee with Councilor Gitschier and Councilor Robinson. They talked about how things are going with Waste Management at length.
- Even though we just raised the rates on trash, we are still operating on a deficit. We haven't raised it little by little. It was a large increase recently, and people reacted to that. It would be better to do it little by little to reduce sticker shock.
- Chris: We received awards from DEP over the last few years.
 - Individual award for Chris for the RFP process. Implementation of AI. There were 17 nominations. Chris accepted the award at Mount Wachusett.
 - Award for right sizing our contract. Waste Management was going to try to increase the cost dramatically. Chris negotiated for a flat renewal, saving \$500,000.
- We have a good team - 4 full time and one part time.
 - Enforcer.
 - Bin repair.
 - Rita Mercier's daughter is secretary.
- Mikaela, Billy, and AC to write up a positive story about Solid Waste.
- Table at Farmer's Market could be helpful.

- b) Update on Advancement of Climate Education in Lowell Public Schools & Student Climate Change Competition (Billy Lefebvre, Jay Mason, & Mikaela Hondros-McCarthy)
- Jay: waiting for clarity from the city about whether we can do this.
 - Mikaela went to the presentations last week. One about litter. One about data centers and AI. One about trees. Combined Sewer Overflow. It was inspiring.
 - Billy: We often forget how much kids are worried about Climate Change.
 - Mikaela: the Civics Day they are planning around is in May. They want to accept applicants in May. In the past, students will present at the Sustainability Council. The Council will present them with a check.
 - We will wait to hear if we are able to publish Mikaela's write-up about the event.
- c) Specialized Stretch Code Recommendation follow-up (Vic Vooys)
- Jay: We just watched a seminar today seeing how it is going in other communities.
 - There are other communities that have implemented it.
 - Ryan: Is there more data about Specialized Stretch Codes since last we spoke?
 - Mikaela: The Council could highlight projects in Lowell that are already Passive House designated.
 - Jay: Over 90% of towns in MA are Green Communities (not with Specialized Stretch Codes, but with Stretch Codes).
- d) Scheduling of bi-annual meeting with City Manager follow-up
- Mikaela spoke with Katherine about this. Katherine is working on it. 3 people can go so we don't violate open meeting law.
 - If you have feedback on what you want on that agenda, send it to Mikaela.
 - Possibly a rotating chair.
 - Further defining our role as a Council.

III. New Business

a) Sustainability Division Updates (Sustainability Division)

- All of the Solar is up and running at Wang, High School, McAuliffe and Robinson.
 - Has been operating since the beginning of the year.
 - Concrete data on how much energy yet.
 - Jay is putting together data on how much energy is being produced. Dashboard.
 - In the process of making a video about the Solar Panels. Jay is in the video.
 - Contracted for 15 more solar projects. Shaunessy and Sullivan should be online by the end of the year. Good news!
 - Only thing left to do at Wang is weatherization.
 - Currently have \$20 million in grants. Green School Works. Renew American Schools. Maybe the TESE.
- Katherine awarded Women in _ Industry Award

b) Upcoming Events and Announcements

-

c) Proposed Items for all 2026 meetings, and proposed presenters (Body)

- Frontrunner City (Katherine Moses to present)
- Open Space Planning
- UMass Lowell LINC Project
- LRTA
- Transportation Director
- State Representative Tara Hong (Sustainability Day debrief)
- Lowell High School Environmental Studies Students
- CBA – Passive House Projects

III. Adjournment

Ryan moved to adjourn

Billy seconded.

Motion passed.