

**CONNECT Economic and Environmental Development
Working Group meeting**

Thursday | December 17, 2020 | 1:00pm
Via Zoom



Municipal Attendees: Patty DeMarco, Forest Hills; Deneen Underwood, Carnegie; RJ Susko, McCandless; Andrew Flynn, Mt. Lebanon; Ron Borczyk, Ross; Ben Estell, Dormont; Talia O'Brien, Etna; Tara Yaney, Edgewood; Mark Sampogna, Green Tree; Joshua Schneider, Pittsburgh; Alexandria Maloney, Bethel Park; Maureen Hartwell, Pittsburgh; Anita Prizio, Allegheny County; Shawn Alfonso-Wells, Swissvale, Heather Wechter, Mt. Lebanon; Nickole Nesby, Duquesne

Other Attendees: Nick Mackereth, DCED; Ashley DiGregorio, PRC; Kate Angell, Scenic Pittsburgh; Breen Masciotra, PAAC; Alyson Fearon, Allegheny Land Trust; Alexis Obernauer, Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board; Joy Smallwood, ACHD; Annie Quinn, 3 Rivers Wet Weather; Jim Price, Sustainable Pittsburgh; Kinsey Miller, Tree Pittsburgh

CONNECT Staff: Lydia Morin, Tess De Jong, Sarah Downing, Eric Raabe, Ally Walker, Tosan Adoki

Introductions

Meet the new Co-Chairs

- Ben Estell, Manager of Dormont and Andrew Flynn, Mt. Lebanon Commissioner give an overview of the topics in the working group and why want to be in and leading this working group

E&E Agenda Overview by Working Group Co-Chairs

- We have CONNECT's recycling report that Ally Walker spent so much time on, we need to create more structure around that so that we can move forward
- We need to work to speak the same language – both in terms of how we talk about this Working Group and the specific terms we use for “waste” items
 - We noticed even in the planning meeting for this WG/agenda that we speak a different language when it comes to how to move things forward. When some speak more visionary and some speak more practically, it may seem like we are at different points, but in reality, we are still trying to say the same message. We need to clearly translate where we want this working group to go
 - The shared language of various categories and components at every level is just as important. Ex: Words like plastic, hauling, contracts, materials, recycling. If we have different interpretations of these words in our individual municipalities, that is a barrier to thinking regionally.

- Similar to how many of us know how to bring “police language” to our councils and “political speak” to the police chief. We know how to translate in order to communicate most effectively, and that’s what we want to do here. The first step for this working group is to build a shared understanding

2020-2022 High Level Agenda for this Working Group

- We see this as the “year of discovery”, of building around our understanding of these topics more deeply
 - 2021 is a deep dive to understand where we are now, what the problems are, and where we could be
 - What is resource management? What are the bests of resource management? How do we manage “waste” streams holistically?
- We had more concrete steps, but then we realized how broad and complex this is. We have great people involved and we don’t want to do it wrong.
- This year will lead up to a summit in December where we will then begin the process of solving some of these problems in 2022
 - We aren’t necessarily going to come out of 2021 with firm yes/no recommendations. We imagine more like “Here’s what we know so far, and here’s how we can understand it better so we are empowered to make our own decisions”
 - Also, we all have contracts for different lengths of time and they start during different months. We don’t want to do any municipality a disservice by rushing forward.
- Comment: Not only is resource management a huge piece of being net zero, but it also helps us be more efficient in the delivery of our services. There are savings for residents and business opportunities as well.
- Comment: as government, we have responsibility to provide that common thinking that will provide the framework where we can have that future
- Comments: as an elected official, I rely on people to provide me a lot of information. Our municipal staff is using language that has been around for decades and relationships they’ve had for decades. This likely varies widely in different municipalities.
 - How do we tell residents what we want them to do, when there are 130 municipalities we want to do it? If we can have common methodologies, just being able to message to residents in the region is a huge step forward. That requires us to rethink things/reimagine
- Additional comments reiterating the importance of language and how it helps us see materials as resources, not waste

- Comment: additionally, those terms expand the framework we are working in. If we view materials holistically, that allows us to tap into other sectors. For example, forest sequestration wouldn't go into recycling contract, but it can still contribute to our goals.
- Brainstorming ideas that we could do as a region but never as a small municipality – a “wish list.” Discussion around different scales.

Next Steps for Regional Recycling – Updates and Asks

- [Presentation](#) by Ally Walker – overview of CONNECT's recycling report
 - During my research, what I saw was exactly what CONNECT tries to combat: 45 solutions to the same problem
 - Presentation of problems (outdated ordinances, website information from 2013, small percentage of communities staying up to date on best practices, language discrepancies)
- Comment: we could flip the script. We can train haulers to change their language and line up with each other. Right now, they're telling us what to do and, but we could tell them
 - Comment: Exactly right! It would be a powerful force of CONNECT to be able to join together to shape what the waste haulers will offer, rather than having them define what options are available.

Outreach Call to Action

- The most important next piece is that make sure all CONNECT councils or relevant committees understand the materials management issues. We want these people to understand how much work has already gone into this issue, and then also how much more needs to be done to move forward
- Please talk to your own council, start the conversation to show how important this is. We need to get the report out there and let people know about the problem. Walk through the high level, hand them the report, and explain that all the details are in the there.
 - If you are willing, please talk to your neighbors, too!
 - One person can't go to 40 council meetings but together we can
 - CONNECT will organize the logistics of what municipal committees would be best to speak with
- We are working on a video that can be shared around and used as a tool
- Acknowledgement of some matters pending before Allegheny County Council. People are ready if we pull this together at a regional level

Final comment: This meeting was structured around the wake of the recycling report and materials management, but Transit Oriented Development is still a high priority issue for this working group. We have a TOD relationships focus group next month (1/21/21) and are still collaborating with transit partners.

Adjourn 2:04pm