

Minutes of the Putnam County Composting Task Force Meeting

February 28, 2025

The fourth meeting of the Putnam County Composting Task Force was called to order at 10:03 a.m.

Members' Present

In Person: Ilona Campo, Barbara Barosa, Joe Montuori, Savannah Usher

Microsoft Teams: Shanna Siegel, Chris Ruthven, Jen Lerner, Jean Bonhotal

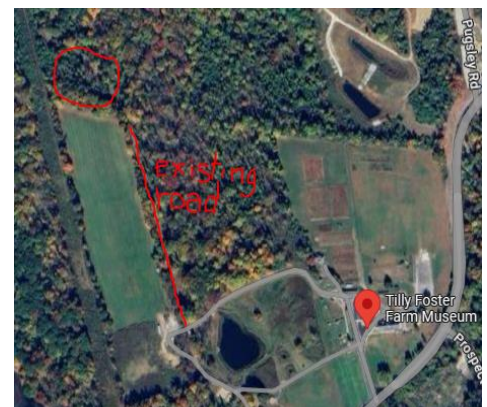
New Attendees:

- **Savannah Usher**, *Solid Waste Manager*, Putnam County Department of Health
- **Jean Bonhotal**, *Director of Cornell Waste Management Institute*

****No comments on January meeting minutes****

1. Open Discussion: Composting Ideas

- Ilona gave a brief overview of what was discussed in previous meetings.
- Jean informed the group that there is another round of grants available from [Empire State Development](#).
- There will be an Organics Summit Conference in Troy, NY from 4/8 – 4/10/25.
- EASP is ruled out as there is no electricity hookup and some farmers within the County (that have used the method) have had negative experiences.
- Ilona summarized the idea for compost machines again: several at different facilities, take the output (dehydrated food scraps) and combine them with the manure and hay on the concrete pad (roughly 40' x 20') or elsewhere at Tilly Foster.
- **Concrete Pad:** Chris confirmed that the concrete pad gets filled rapidly due to an excess of wood shavings. Chris doesn't anticipate too many food scraps being generated from county facilities, if anything, it would help facilitate the breakdown of the material already on the pad.
- The manure currently on the pad is roughly 1/3 of what they produce throughout the year.
- Chris mentioned they can get four rows of manure stacked on to the concrete pad at once, but they prefer to do it on the two sides as the pad slopes towards the center and the water drains out the back into the retention pond. WAC inspects the retention pond twice a year and the runoff goes through two retention pond systems (sediment is removed by the first pond) before it hits the stream that feeds into the reservoir. Chris says the easement map will determine if there is room to expand the pad. However, the pad tends to fill up throughout the winter season then gets spread in spring.
- As far as we know, DEC has no record of the concrete pad and it is not registered, but farms are exempt from a lot of regulations.
- **Five Acres:** If the location for the pilot program is within the WAC easement at Tilly it would require more discussions with WAC. However, the five acres behind the hay fields are not under the easement rendering them except from WAC's restrictions. This would be the ideal location for the pilot program.
- There is a decent roadway to the five acre property behind the hayfields, and there should be no trouble with access in the near future as they aim to clear the trees on the property. There are no other plans for the five acres besides municipal stockpiles for excess wood shavings, topsoil, gravel, alternate parking for the excavator/loader, etc. The drainage around the five acres is fantastic, very flat ground that used to be field land/small pine



trees. Jean suggested forming a shield with the trees (with an entrance) to allow for a bio-filter (odor) and sight privacy. The whole area is walkable and there should be no issue with more advanced master composter trainings using the area for demonstrations.

- Chris is planning on putting geotextile cloth and gravel over the five acres to prevent sinking in wetter conditions. Topsoil is typically removed before the geotextile cloth is laid.
- Both locations will be utilized for excess manure/wood shavings. There is no leaf collection for the County like some of the towns have.
- **Collections:** Next issue would be manpower for collections and pile turning. Savannah addressed that concern by explaining that she has met with the [Arc Mid-Hudson](#) who are the current laborers for the County's Litter Patrol program. Savannah evaluated their current contract and determined that the County has been overpaying for labor associated with the litter pickup service. With that being said, if we need the laborers to be trained and assist with the collection of food scraps, Jennifer Beisswenger, the Arc's Assistant Director of Employment Services, is in full support. As long as we start small with the pilot program it should not be too labor intensive. We can start planning in 2025 and implementing in 2026. Chris was in full support of the idea as well.
- Jean concurred that the ideal situation would be to mix the food scraps into the manure/ wood shavings but warned about garbage contamination.
- We need to focus on only food scraps in the collection containers and have the containers be labeled according to the facility/department so it's easier to trace contamination back to its source and address it with proper education. Arc should also be able to help with education and monitoring. Another option is to have high school students help with collection (volunteers); however, we would need to collect food scraps from the high school if that was the case (better to keep this separate for now).
- CWMI has multiple [fact sheets](#) available as resources.
- Savannah reiterated that mixing commercial and municipal food scraps would be an issue for collections from the Tilly's Table restaurant. The restaurant is a private entity, but the County gets a flat rate from the profit (into the general fund). There currently is no food scrap recycling at the restaurant right now, but they could fall under other requirements from the DEC.
- Jean reminded the group that there shouldn't be too many rules to start. We need to make it clear that people should only be adding food scraps that are **generated during the workday**. Jean warned that we will not get enough food scraps from the regular office facilities alone, we will need to add the senior centers (Putnam Valley, Mahopac, and Carmel) since they are still considered municipal. Additionally, we need to find out how much waste is generated from 2 meals per day, five days a week (50-60 seniors on a good day). Jean suggested a weigh and sort method for this task (high school kids and/or seniors can potentially be volunteers). The County's jail can be another source of municipal food scrap waste, can the prisoners assist with the weigh and sort? Jean reiterated that using volunteers to help with food scrap separation helps to eliminate food waste too as it makes people more mindful of how much they are not consuming.
- **DEC Registration:** We will need to submit a registration application through DEC Region 3. Since nobody has started the conversation with the DEC yet, we will need to draft a rough outline to send to them in order to get their initial guidance on how to proceed with the registration process. Regulatory citations and oversight regulations are listed on the [DEC website](#). A registration form should be filled out immediately.
- Jean suggested getting a drawing with acreage, drainage, slope, water run-on, water runoff, etc. ready to send to the DEC with the registration packet. Jean offered to help draw up the plans for the site location with the Task Force's aid.
- The County will be considered a municipal/institutional source. The Tilly's Table restaurant is considered a commercial source.
- More links: https://extapps.dec.ny.gov/docs/materials_minerals_pdf/orgformadden.pdf
- Transportation of food scraps would also require a permit if the collections are equal to or greater than 2,000lbs per trip. There is also a risk of employees bringing food scraps from home which will increase the collection weight. Savannah suggested another program wherein county employees (that

live in Putnam) can bring in their food scraps and transport it to the drop off site, however, it would then be classified as residential.

- Biggest concerns at the moment are permits and registrations. We will need to check with DEC and the County Code.

2. Other Business / Comments

- The Task Force expressed interest in taking a field trip to other facilities that have food scrap recycling operations such as McEnroe's Farm. Ilona and Savannah will work to set those up and/or attend separately and report back.
- Again, the 2025 NYS Organics Summit will be held in Troy, NY from April 8th – 10th, 2025. Savannah will be in attendance and will attend one (or both) of the two tours to local compost facilities. Jean will not be attending. Separate [registration](#) for the tour is necessary, however it would involve your own transportation to Troy. Savannah is happy to attend alone and report back.
 - Tour 1: Large Scale Organics Recycling Facilities including Wagner Farm Anaerobic Digester and Town of Bethlehem Compost Facility
 - Tour 2: Community Composting Sites including Radix Ecological Sustainability Center and Schenectady Community Compost.
- The program should be called "County Facility Compost Pilot Program". A residential program will need to be kept separate because Tilly does not have the capacity or staff/labor for residential inclusion. Perhaps we can work with the Towns to have them create their own compost locations to lower the costs of refuse and recycling to their residents.
- [CRP](#) in Cortlandt Manor, NY would be the closest facility that offers organics recycling for residential collections (CRP would have to be permitted with the County). Philipstown is also not composting within the town, they haul it away.
- Shanna reminded Savannah to document the questions and processes as an aid when the time comes to present to the County administration. There has not been a solidified idea to present to the County Executive yet.
- Goal is to have the pilot program outlined and drafted by October in time to apply for the next round of grants (based on last year's grant timeframe). Alexis may also have language to use for RFPs.
- Next Climate Action Summit is scheduled for March 28th, 2025.
- Next HHHWD is scheduled for April 26th, 2025.

3. Action Items:

- Chris will send Ilona the proposed WAC easement that will outline the boundary of the property, and it is expected to be completed by 2026. The five acres have nothing to do with WAC.
- Need to draft a pilot program outline and include the details of the site location.
- Savannah will schedule a tour with the DRC in Dutchess.
- Ilona will reach out to Angelina from UCRRA and McEnroe for tours.
- Narrow down next meetings to focus on permitting requirements.
- Quantify waste generated from jail and senior centers.

Meeting adjourned at 11:19 a.m.