

Minutes of the Putnam County Residential Composting Task Force Meeting

October 11, 2024

The second meeting of the Putnam County Residential Composting Task Force was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

Members' Present

In Person: Ilona Campo, Barbara Barosa, Sean Bennett, Neal Tomann, Nicole Scott

Microsoft Teams: Vicki DiLonardo, Shanna Siegel, Joe Montuori, Chris Ruthven

New Attendees:

- **Neal Tomann**, *Interim Soil & Water Conservation District Director*, Putnam County Department of Public Works
- **Chris Ruthven**, *Director of Parks & Recreation*, Putnam County Department of Public Works
- **Nicole Scott**, *Associate Director – Livestock Operations and AFPB Board Member*, Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming, Cold Spring

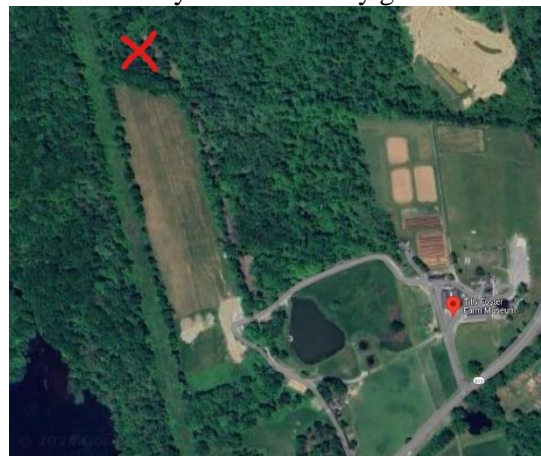
****No comments on September meeting minutes****

1. **Recap: SHV Circular Economy Summit**

- Ilona attended the Circular Economy Summit hosted by Sustainable Hudson Valley on 9/12/24 at SUNY Orange in Newburgh, NY. Among the presenters were several notable local and national leaders, including Dave Bennink, a deconstruction contractor; Cynthia Power from Molte Volte textile recycling; and Angelina Brandt, the Director of Sustainability at UCRRA. Most notably, Angelina gave a [presentation](#) on Ulster's Extended Aerated Static Pile (EASP) method which proved very effective and successful. This may be a method we could mimic on a smaller scale for our county facility composting pilot program. Ulster started the project in 2012 with a startup cost of \$55,000 funded by a DEC grant. They started selling the finished compost in 2023.

2. **Discuss: Benefits/Challenges/Costs and Narrowing Down Options**

- At the last meeting we discussed the options of composting at the County facilities themselves vs. bringing those food scraps to a more centralized location vs. contracting with a hauler to take it to an industrial composting facility.
- Most feasible: starting a food scrap composting pilot program for county facilities and bringing the organic waste to a central location(s) within the County.
- Chris confirmed that there is an existing manure/wood shavings compost pad at Tilly Foster. Ilona asked if it would be feasible to lay a larger concrete pad to try the EASP method. Chris answered that they are limited due to the easement on the Farm and by the community gardens (the areas are restricted due to streams headed towards the reservoir). There is also a limit on impervious surfaces. However, with the recently acquired 135 acres on the back and side of Tilly Foster, another option is to trade off restrictions of the easement to block all that property (there is currently no easement on those acres, they are available to use). Blocking off 5 of the 135 acres of flat, usable land behind the hay field at the back of Tilly Foster (see pic) where they currently stockpile topsoil and mulch may be the best method. Easement timeframe is 1.5 years until agreement. Barbara asked



if it makes more sense to do it at VMP, however, level ground is the biggest challenge. Chris approved the idea of a 15'x15' concrete pad.

- The golf course and potentially the TF restaurant **will not** be included in this pilot program as we want to avoid commercial, industrial, and institutional (CII) sources at this time.
- Chris said VMP is locked at 3:30pm from Labor Day to Memorial Day but the access to Tilly is open 24/7 which is ideal for different employees' work schedules.
- Chris said the County's landscapers no longer collect leaves or grass clippings as they're typically mulched with the lawn mowers or blown into the woods to reduce time and labor. Lake Carmel has leaf waste pickup every year.
- Vicki and Chris concurred that the wood shavings and manure would be great carbon (brown/yard) sources. Less amounts of manure mixed with wood shavings would be preferable. The County has an unlimited, consistent supply of wood chips which will be the primary addition to the EASP.
- There was not a general consensus to pursue compost machines or not.
- If we wanted to consider the three pile EASP method on a concrete slab, we would likely need a larger surface area depending on anticipated participation. There may need to be more work up front for the EASP but it should pay off in the long run.
- Ilona created a list of pros/cons for different composting methods. Food scrap drop off would be the most feasible and cost effective for county residents. Ideally we could buy bins in bulk then offer them to residents at a subsidized rate. Neal brought up the similar program in Philipstown. Joe added that there will be a significant difference between the acceptable items for the county facility collection vs commercial food scrap drop off programs in that those programs allow for the addition of meat, bones, paper products, etc. He also mentioned Philipstown's program components: \$20 for the smaller countertop bins (one time cost), 60 gallon totes on wheels, and a carting fee of roughly \$10,000/year. Philipstown collects once per week and covers the cost of carting (which may or may not be shared with Cold Spring). Cost for residents include the one time purchase of the bins and the associated gas costs to drive them to designated locations.

3. Discuss: Action Items

- **Grants:** DEC just released the [Municipal Food Scraps Recycling Grant Program](#) for the minimum award of \$1,000 and maximum award for \$200,000 with a 75% (DEC) 25% (County) match. The match is considerably less than the typical Climate Smart Grants which is a 50/50 match. Some of their eligible projects include the cost of carting and purchasing a food scrap carting truck. The deadline to apply for DEC's grant is **1/31/25**. Applications are accepted until DEC withdraws requests for applications, funds are exhausted, or the application deadline, whichever comes first. There will potentially be other grants available through the USDA Compost & Food Waste Reduction Program with a 75/25 match, but they may not be available until next year.
- **Survey:** Jen developed a more detailed community survey to gauge interest in residential composting options. She provided handouts for the survey and notified attendees at the Open House at the Farm day on October 5th. We hope to hear more about the results at the next meeting
- **County Executive Approval:** Now that budget season is over, it may be a good idea to bring this initiative to the County Exec's attention.
- **Health Dept. Role:** This initiative could fit better under the scope of the Solid Waste Coordinator position which is expected to start in 2025.
- **Short Term Goals/Consensus:** Once the concrete pad is laid and the wood chip pile is established, develop a pilot program for the collection of organic waste (not to include bones, meat, dairy, etc.) at county office facilities and take them to a central location, ideally TF.
- **Process for Collecting at County Offices:** Ilona had the vision that the County would purchase small to medium size bins in bulk and distribute them to interested departments/offices. Then designate a point person in each department to monitor the bins. To quantify the results of food

scrap diversion, it would be best to weigh the collections before adding them to the pile. Perhaps keeping a large food scale at Tilly Foster right near the piles would be best. We need to reevaluate the use of compostable bags which would be the easiest method for the appointed individual to remove the scraps from the bin(s), zero out the weight of the bin, and ultimately weigh the diverted food scraps. Ideally the pile should get hot enough to break the bags down, but we need to conduct more research on whether the EASP will need to be churned or if more air needs to be forced through in order for that to happen.

- **Other Ideas:** Nicole suggested pouring a larger concrete pad than we initially think we may need as Glynwood had an issue with a larger than expected input/capacity. It also may be cheaper to pour a larger pad. Will there be an issue with animals? Barbara suggested starting the program with the larger composting bins that the Health Dept. currently sells first (while still using wood chips), but Vicki brought up the point that these may not get hot enough to break down compostable bags. They do, however, keep the animals out (with the exception of mice). Joe added that when mixed with wood chips, the food scrap piles shouldn't be too attractive to animals as we would not be including meat, bones, cooked starches, etc. (paper towels and napkins should be fine). Ilona suggested erecting a chain link fence around the perimeter to deter animals.

4. **Other Business / Comments**

- Next RCTF meeting is tentatively scheduled for Friday, December 13th at 10am.
- Feel free to invite others, any input is helpful!
- We received \$15,000 for electric landscaping equipment and \$125,000 for solar panels at the Transit Facility from NYSERDA. Planning complete by Summer 2025, installation by Fall 2025. Neal suggested getting a pic with the new electric landscaping equipment.
- NYSERDA Battery Energy Storage System Law training is tentatively scheduled for November.
- Vicki gave an update on the most recent HHWD which was a success with 309 cars, the vendor was great. Next event is scheduled for the last Saturday in April or the first Saturday in May 2025. The event takes place at Fahenstock Canopus Beach parking lot.
- Joe mentioned that Sustainable Putnam has partnered with Sustainable Westchester to host a Green Purchasing Webinar on October 22nd for municipal officials. DEC OGS and White Plains will be presenting.

5. **Action Items:**

- Research EASP method more, particularly if it will break down compostable bags.
- Verify with Chris that a 15'x15' (or larger) concrete pad is feasible at Tilly Foster behind the hay field.
- With County Exec. and Legislature's approval, apply for DEC grant by 1/31/25.

Meeting adjourned at 10:53 a.m.

Next meeting tentatively scheduled for Friday, December 13, 2024 at 10am