



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Zero Waste Advisory Commission

**From:** Heather-Nicole Hoffman, ZWAC Organics Management Committee Chair and Sam Angoori, P.E. Interim Director, Austin Resource Recovery (ARR)

**Subject:** Organics Management Committee 2016 Summary

**Date:** February 8, 2017

The purpose of this memo is to summarize actions of the Organics Management Committee of the Zero Waste Advisory Commission (ZWAC) for calendar year 2016 as required by current bylaws.

### Background

The committee was created in 2015 with the following goal: to collaborate with staff by making recommendations to the ARR Director regarding collaborations with its regional partners to develop policies for organic waste prevention and recovery consistent with the Zero Waste Master Plan. The goal also includes ensuring the success of organics diversion through the Universal Recycling Ordinance and curbside organics collection.

According to the most recent Diversion study conducted by ARR, 37% of materials currently sent to the landfill are compostable materials. ARR has developed a variety of initiatives to address increased organics diversion. These include:

- The Home Composting Rebate program: This program offers free composting classes and a \$75 rebate towards a home composter to encourage onsite composting.
- Curbside collection: After several years of a pilot curbside organics collection program involving approximately 14,000 residences, ARR is expanding this service city wide over the next four years.
- URO implementation: In Fall 2016, the first Phase 1 of URO organics diversion requirements take effect. In this first year, businesses 15,000 square feet or larger will be affected. This mostly includes grocery stores and warehouse distribution centers. In October 2017, this requirement expands to business greater than 5,000 square feet and in 2018 the requirements expand to all businesses. Businesses are required to: establish an organics diversion program, provide convenient access to organic diversion services, submit an Organic Diversion Plan, and adopt multiple organic diversion methods such as source reduction, donation and composting.



## **Status**

The Organics Management Committee was created by ZWAC in 2015 and the Committee met for the first time in June 6, 2016. Committee Members Heather-Nicole Hoffman and Amanda Masino attended. This meeting served primarily to establish the structure and goals of the committee. The Chair suggested the goals include ensure the success of organics diversion through URO implementation and expanded curbside collection. The Committee also discussed preferred meeting times, process for stakeholder input, the future topics to discuss.

The second Organics Management Committee Meeting was held on July 15, 2016. Committee Members Heather-Nicole Hoffman, Amanda Masino, and Kaiba White attended. ARR staff provided an update on Organics Diversion implementation of the URO, focusing on impact to businesses and education/outreach efforts, and the CBD Compost Pilot project.

In response to City Council action regarding two pending contracts impacting biosolids management policy in August, the Organics Management Committee called a meeting on September 8, 2016 to receive briefing from Austin Water Utility staff on Biosolids Management and to provide recommendations to the ZWAC on Zero Waste policy consideration as it relates to biosolids management planning. AW staff briefed the committee on biosolids processing methods, testing, regulatory requirements, and the history and projected future of the Dillo Dirt program. Stakeholders were present and participated in open discussion regarding biosolids policy and practices. The Commission agreed on a vote of 2-0 (Kaiba White absent) to recommend that biosolids management planning should consider the following policies: Honor the highest and best use hierarchy with the goal of prioritizing Class A Biosolids or higher as feasible, except in emergency situations; ensure that the City maintains final decision for the disposition of biosolids with a Class B or lower classification; and preserve the Dillo Dirt trademarked name and compost quality, regardless of who produces the product. This agenda item was the basis for further discussion at a ZWAC, Water Wastewater Commission, and joint ZWAC/WWW working group meetings and was further refined before being recommended to City Council for adoption by ZWAC, WWW, and the working group.

## **Next Steps**

The Curbside Organics collection will expand with new customers added in spring/summer of 2016. This service will include changes from the pilot program that implement lessons learned during that process.

The Committee will continue to monitor and provide input on current programs including the URO, curbside organics collection and biosolids management as well as explore options for addressing additional organics resources in the City of Austin.