

Emmet County Materials Management Planning Committee (MMPC)
Meeting Minutes

10/06/2025, 10:00AM

EMS Eppler Station, 1201 Eppler Road, Petoskey, MI 49770

Emmet County Staff Present: Ashley McMurry, Lindsey Walker, Noelle Behling (virtual), Jayna Steffel

Guests: Taylor Moore (Food Rescue of Northwest Michigan)

Carrie Klingelsmith (The Manna Food Project)

Resource Recycling Staff Present: Elisa Seltzer, Katelyn Heflin (virtual)

Call to order: Doug called meeting to order at 10:04a.m.

Roll Call

- a. Lindsey Walker – present
- b. Kevin Donner – absent
- c. Denny Keiser, Chair - absent
- d. Doug Fuller, Vice Chair – present
- e. Allen Elya III – absent
- f. Jayna Steffel – present
- g. Caroline Moellering – present
- h. Stephanie Marchbanks – present
- i. Chris Gee – present
- j. Don Mapes – present

Approval of Last Meeting's Minutes

Motion to approve by L. Walker seconded by C. Moellering. Approved.

Committee Updates

Ashley McMurry's formal resignation from the MMPC was approved by the Board of Commissioners on September 18. On the same date, Jayna Steffel was appointed by the Board to serve on the MMPC as the MRF operator. Ashley McMurry now serves as the formal Designated Planning Agency (DPA) representative for Emmet County.

Committee Input Form Feedback and Feedback on Draft Recycling Chapter

McMurry read the most recent Committee feedback. Emmet will share results from the previous parallel study with the Committee.

Walker noted that with this new materials management planning process, we want to be sure to look at institutional food waste and food rescue. Walker additionally noted that there are opportunities to get in on the specs of landscaping in the county in public sector developments.

Taylor Moore, Director, Food Rescue, Goodwill

12 employees total, four full-time employees. They provide food to over 70 different programs. They prioritize rescuing whole foods, fruits and vegetables, making up the bulk of rescue. They rescue 8 – 10 thousand pounds of food per day. Almost 1,000 loads of food every day! They work with grocers to capture their surplus. Goodwill has a large footprint across Emmet and other counties to capture surplus foods. They work with 210 donors across the region. At one of their middle school pickups, they get 180 pounds of food at each pickup. They also rescue at farmers markets. They have a program called Healthy Harvest where they glean farms. Farms till in, feed the birds; it's not a big point source for food waste going to landfill, when you compare it to resident homes and grocery stores. At Goodwill warehouses, they rescue frozen food and repack it. They also rescue food from farms and repack. Today, they will rescue sweet corn, pears, and apples. They've just launched a Food Rescue app – Food Rescue US. This allows third parties to get involved in pick up and distribution. The app brings in volunteers that have allowed them to pick up food waste at Costco over the weekend.

Walker asked about the intersection between food rescue and composting. Moore noted that about 10% of food rescued cannot feed people. Volunteers de-case the food and then freeze it. Farmers tend to pick this food up to feed their livestock. They work with SEEDS as well to better coordinate with the food pantries.

Moore noted that the app allows access to organizations with food waste that would otherwise not be able to afford to coordinate food rescue.

Walker asked about de-packaging and if this is a key to more organics diversion. Moore noted that they are only de-packaging items that are easy to de-package. All the canned goods are thrown out.

Carrie Klingelsmith, Executive Director, The Manna Food Project

Have a staff of eight people currently. They have a robust system of volunteers. They work across three northwest Michigan counties. They partner with over 40 food distribution partners and have 500,000 visits for food. They're trying to increase their produce, dairy,

and meat rescue. Last year, they distributed over 1.5 million pounds of food. They purchase the majority of their food (52.8%) and would like to really focus on increasing the use of rescued food. They have limited staff time to increase rescued food. They've outgrown the space of their facility which limits the amount of rescued food they're able to process. They're trying to work on building closer partnerships and educating the community.

The Committee discussed efforts to coordinate food rescue, de-packaging, and food bank feeding in the county. Walker mentioned the opportunity of having a truck that could rescue food during energy outages, like the ice storm in March this spring.

Organics Overview

Seltzer gave an overview of EGLE suggestions for materials management planning for organics.

Seltzer reviewed Emmet's goals and objectives related to organics from their last plan in the 2000s. Elisa additionally highlighted the county's SWOT analysis that identifies where there are still opportunities to build out organics diversion in the county.

Suggested Staff Organics Goals and Discussion

McMurtry reviewed the suggested staff goals for organics diversion in four phases. Phase 1 – short term site refinements, Phase 2 – a cost analysis, Phase 3 – long term site improvements, and Phase 4 – piloting residential food scrap collection.

McMurtry requested feedback from the Committee.

Phase 1 - short term site refinements

- Turning, screening (annually), grinding operations (bi-annually)
- Compost Operator and Training (this fall)
- Evaluation of bulk delivery
- Site improvement for water management
- 2026 engineering study, consider repairs or expansion of the site
- 2027: Conduct study to assess possibility of utilizing additional land for composting- public public/public private collaboration. Permit considerations, zoning, volume designations.
- Consider bagging upgrades – more automated, additional soil amendments – end-product expansion. Expand distribution to additional outlets for better sales. Improve from 20-30 bags/qtr. to 20-30 bags/day sold.
- Consider technology to better screen out contaminants

Phase 2 - cost analysis

- Assess commercial route density Petoskey, Harbor Springs
- Prepare a rate sheet that enables the program to cover its costs
- Evaluate opportunities for capital funding
- Continuing to improve opportunities for residents to compost food waste – goals were achieved from previous plan.
- Expand residential drop offs – similar to food shed at Drop Off Center (DOC) – analyze costs.
- Harbor Springs, 2 in Petoskey, DOC = 4 available now.
 - Add 3-5 sites, consider one school, Multi Family/ association drop off service.
- Expand the Give All Food a Future (GAFAF) program. (3-4 years)
 - Expand access for residents to compost food scraps (currently carts, consider sheds to house them at new locations, including existing recycle drop off sites.)
- Expand an education campaign (27'-28'). Tie in partnerships with Manna and Food Rescue and educate residents on how to keep food from the bins, donate food, and participate in composting GAFAF program.

Walker noted we need to have buy in from the community and establish very intentional partnerships. They have to think about costs for the infrastructure, collection and disposal. Walker noted that they must educate residents about the decrease in their trash bill when they begin to compost. The Committee discussed where yard waste flows and how they can find synergies between educating residents on yard waste versus food waste.

The Committee discussed the need for increased education to businesses. McMurry mentioned the opportunity to have a GAFAF drop off at food pantries across the county, pairing the access to healthy foods with compost opportunities to residents. They currently have drop off sites for GAFAF at the farmers markets and the GAFAF shed. This could be fundable through an EGLE organics grant; it represents expansion, contributing to the circular economy.

- Commercial:
 - explore how best to integrate food rescue into recovery efforts for commercial food scrap recovery.
 - Invest in improved collection infrastructure.
 - Increase outreach to increase collection services/volumes

The Committee discussed the gap of food rescue in the county and developing more partnerships across the county with organizations doing this work. Walker mentioned the need to educate residents and businesses on the price point between garbage and recycling/compost.

Phase 3 – long term site improvements

- Explore the integration of upgraded technology (ASP)
- Capital improvements
- Detailed multi-year cost analysis
- Regulatory evaluations
- Marketing plan for additional material
- Consider partnership offsite
- Standardized Education goal developed

The Committee discussed moving the compost pad and pushing back the brush pile to build a new compost pad. They have plenty of space on their existing site but also discussed exploring other locations across the county. Walker mentioned a partnership with the former road commission/Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) or partnering with the LTBB Governmental Center right across the street from the county as alternative sites.

walker mentioned that they've been approached by a private sector operator for a private-public partnership where the municipality would own the site, but the private company would run the operations. Walker mentioned that Emmet could be a good candidate for a private-public partnership but noted that the county would need to make a business case for it and bring in large volumes in order to justify that investment. Considerations: how to sell more compost into soil blends sold commercially; how best to leverage state grants; aerated static piles – consider economics of investment. Emmet County mentioned that they can share initial financial projections from conversations with this potential partner.

Analyze ROI, funding/operational costs. Explore opportunities for partnership with farmer or road commission/WWTP or partnership with LTBB at alternate site.

Phase 4 – piloting residential food scrap collection

- Residential pilot program – three to five years out.
- Explore residential pilot program for food scrap collection including costs, service options, seasonal food scrap in yard waste cart as option for pilot.

Policy

Policy should be another goal – what policy levers could Michigan and Emmet leverage? What are local policies that are effective in the absence of food waste policies in the state? A goal could be exploring a commercial food waste ban for the county over the next 5 years before the next planning period.

Funding

Seltzer asked about what EGLE is willing and able to fund. Tracy with EGLE mentioned that reimbursements are currently in a holding pattern until 2026 once they've onboarded two new analysts. They will put out a recycling infrastructure RFP soon. Organics grants will be worked on after that. EGLE shared that The Recycling Partnership is going to focus on providing funds to EPR states, which Michigan is currently not. Tracy with EGLE mentioned that they have had staff turnover and will be re-assigning MMP grants and reimbursements, and there may be delays.

Walker mentioned there is currently a grant through NextCycle for organics. Seltzer mentioned that NextCycle is a great feeder program to get projects for future EGLE and other funding across Michigan. Walker encouraged Manna Food project to look into joining NextCycle.

Education

Reduce, Rescue, Compost – address contamination. Share widely with businesses, municipalities, and LTTB. Highlight benefits. Use food caddies for promotion. Consider kitchen caddy giveaways in unique locations (like food banks).

Public Comment

None

Next Steps

Next meeting November 3rd at 10:00a.m.

Meeting adjournment

Motion to adjourn by J. Steffel, seconded by L. Walker. Meeting adjourned at 12:04p.m.

Approved by: _____