

**Emmet County Materials Management Planning Committee (MMPC)**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**09/08/2025, 10:00AM**

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

**Emmet County Staff Present:** Ashley McMurry, Lindsey Walker, Noelle Behling, Jayna Steffel

**Guests:** Aubree Carlisle, EGLE Food Waste Specialist (virtual)

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

**Call to order:** D. Keiser called the meeting to order at 10:04 am

**Roll Call**

- a. Lindsey Walker – present
- b. Marie Passino – resigned from committee
- c. Kevin Donner – present
- d. Denny Keiser, chair - present
- e. Doug Fuller, vice chair – absent
- f. Allen Elya III – present
- g. Ashley McMurry – present
- h. Caroline Moellering – present
- i. Stephanie Marchbanks – present
- j. Chris Gee – present
- k. Don Mapes – absent

**Committee Updates**

A. McMurry noted her letter of resignation as the MRF operator has been written and turned into chair of the MMPC, D. Keiser. J. Steffel, DPW Director, has completed MRF Operator application and turned into Clerk's office for Board of Commissioner approval. A. McMurry has informed EGLE she will now act as Designated Planning Agency (DPA).

**Feedback on Draft Recycling Chapter**

McMurry shared print outs of the draft recycling chapter and asked the Committee for feedback before the next MMP Committee meeting. Noted that some goals may be more appropriate in the organics or other chapters.

## **Committee Input Form Feedback**

McMurry reviewed feedback on goals and the comment from S. Marchbanks about adjusting the zero waste goal.

## **Organics Overview**

Seltzer reviewed the state's high level goals of cutting food waste in half by 2030. Seltzer highlighted that organics make up 38% of waste landfilled in Michigan and noted we can not reach our diversion goals without addressing organics and food waste. Seltzer noted the need to grow organics facilities that accept food waste across the state.

Walker gave an overview of the SEEDS Regional Study that includes Emmet County. She noted that there is an opportunity to move the needle with residential food waste reduction and commercial collection from restaurants, etc. Walker noted that the ordinances Emmet utilizes enable organics waste diversion.

## **Emmet County Recycling – The circular economy of food scrap recovery, composting, and building community around compost**

McMurry reviewed current organics operations and aspirations. Walker gave an overview of the compost site and noted that major engineering updates need to be considered. Walker recapped the growth of organics collection from curbside service and drop off options. Walker noted we need to spread the compost hub throughout the northern sector of the county. Walker noted they don't have the infrastructure and equipment to do their own screening. Walker shared examples of compost uses in landscaping and tree planting. Walker summarized education efforts to address contamination in food scrap drop offs. Walker shared examples of backyard compost bins they make available to residents. Walker also noted the sale of compost bags and how it supports educating community members.

McMurry reviewed the Phases that the County has laid out for future organics improvements through their participation in EGLE's NextCycle program:

Phase 1 – short term compost site refinements

Phase 2 – cost analysis

Phase 3 – long-term site redesign

Phase 4 – residential food scrap collection pilot

Through Emmet's participation in NextCycle, Emmet County identified that they want to pilot residential food scrap collection.

### **EGLE Food Waste Reduction Specialist, Aubree Carlisle**

Carlisle gave an overview of the state's goals to divert food waste from landfills and noted the benefits to Michigan households and food insecure people. Carlisle reviewed the alignment of food waste reduction with state, national, and international goals. Carlisle highlighted the issues of methane emissions caused by food waste sent to landfills. Carlisle shared a template for building food waste reduction targets in the materials management planning process. Noted the county should be putting efforts into existing programs. Carlisle shared best practices, like building education and outreach as you increase your infrastructure, capacity, and funding. Carlisle shared an overview of different grants such as organics infrastructure and, hopefully, a food rescue-related grant. Carlisle reviewed the Blueprint to Zero Food Waste in Southfield and noted it's a good template to understand how other cities are addressing food waste in Michigan. Carlisle noted the availability of technical assistance from EGLE outside of materials management planning. Carlisle shared additional stats around food waste and multiple resources to better understand challenges and opportunities to address food waste. Carlisle reviewed food rescue options, upcycling, and animal consumption, as first priorities of diversion. Carlisle reviewed other options of organics management such as anaerobic digestion and pre-processing technologies.

### **Suggested Staff Organics Goals + Feedback and Discussion**

Phase 1 includes short term site refinements:

- turning, screening, grinding operations
- Compost Operator and Training
- Evaluation of bulk delivery
- Site improvement for water management
  - o Walker noted that this funding comes in through budgetary cycles.
  - o They've put together a department master plan to look at site flow engineering to address the heavy traffic and look at the flow of people moving through the site.
  - o They are looking at a new pad, brownfield redevelopment, or utilization of additional acres on the same site.
    - K. Donner suggested looking at other potential sites across the County and noted that there are pros and cons with operating the

windrows next to the collection center and contamination. He noted there are options to look at other places and solve multiple problems at once.

- Suggested goal – in 2027, do an engineering and research study for public-private partnerships for new compost sites.
- A study on what de-centralized sites throughout the County may look like – this is similar to what many farmers do – lease land from private land owners to farm.
- Seltzer noted that there are composters collaborating with farms and there are plenty of examples of what this could look like.
- The Committee discussed creating multiple types of compost to appeal to Emmet County farmers, utilizing multiple types of crops. The need to automate the process of composting to produce tailored compost formulas to tap into the ag end market.
- Current goal is to complete the initial engineering study to look at moving the compost operations in 2027.
- K. Donner asked about PFAS. McMurry noted this may be out of the scope of this Committee.
  - Walker noted that biosolids are still being applied to land and once you test for PFAS in here, you're obligated to do something about it.
  - Walker noted that this opens a can of worms, but there are no solutions to that type of contamination.
  - Walker reviewed the current tests they operate in Emmet County and the costs for these tests.
  - Seltzer noted a good place to start is looking at your inputs for your compost and addressing PFAs from these inputs, "compostable" silverware, to go ware, etc.
  - The Committee discussed technologies that address contamination in organics, like WeCare Denali uses, e.g., screens. Noted that Emmet County utilizes education to decrease contamination but could also consider screening equipment.

Phase 2 includes the cost analysis:

- Assess route density
  - This is complete.
- Prepare a rate sheet that enables the program to cover its costs

- This is complete.
- Evaluate opportunities for capital funding
  - This is complete.
- Currently this program is subsidized through the tip fees at the transfer station.
- The route densification looked at commercial entities. Looked at restaurants, businesses. The tipping fee has gone from \$8 to \$10 per cart.
- A big goal in the coming years: pilot a residential food scrap collection program.
  - The current drop sites for recyclables would make great sites for Give All Food A Future (GAFAF) drop sites as well.
  - Partnered with Amish community to build shed utilizing Harvest Grant from NextCycle program.
  - How do we fund these moving forward? What is the investment versus ROI for these upgrades and how can we better incorporate these considerations into our decision making?
- Zero Waste
  - Walker noted that we should keep zero waste as a goal because we have to aspire to something. McMurry added that zero waste is actually defined as 90% diversion and acknowledged that some materials will ultimately end up in landfill.
- Piloting and Addressing Contamination
  - McMurry suggested piloting a GAFAF drop off in neighborhoods and making sure they are capable of managing contamination before launching curbside services in those neighborhoods.
  - The Committee discussed other contamination management techniques such as cameras, keypad entry, and rate scheduling to incentivize a decrease in contamination.
- Lowest Hanging Fruit Goals
  - Add 3-5 more townships and neighborhood associations for organics drop off pilots.
  - Ensure schools are participating in commercial organics diversion program and provide incentives to do so.
    - McMurry asked if they could require schools to maintain a hoop house or operate a backyard compost program.
    - Seltzer noted there are multiple NextCycle teams that have looked at organics diversion and composting in schools.
    - Suggested goal – by 2027 pilot one school.

Phase 3 will be the long-term site improvements, including:

- Explore the integration of upgraded technology (ASP)
  - o This is complete.
- Capital improvements
- Detailed multi-year cost analysis
- Regulatory evaluations
  - o Just passed their compost site inspection for the year.
- Marketing plan for additional material
- The Committee discussed the challenges with education in post-consumer organic waste and restaurants.
  - o Restaurants have constant staff turnover which makes education challenging.

Phase 4 will be our residential pilot program for food scrap collection.

- Seltzer noted that RRS has a cost model for residential food scrap collection.

### **Public Comment**

None

### **Next Steps**

- Next Meeting: Monday, October 6, 2025
  - Organics reduction and food rescue – presentation from Goodwill.
- Friday, September 19<sup>th</sup> – tour of Emmet County compost facility at 9 AM.

### **Meeting adjournment**

Motion to adjourn the meeting by D. Keiser and seconded by McMurry. Meeting adjourned at 11:59a.m.

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_

TO BE APPROVED AT FUTURE MEETING