



Minutes

SW MI Materials Management Planning Committee

Monday, August 18, 2025, at 1:00 p.m.

Location: Pokagon Band Community Center
27043 Potawatomi Trail Dowagiac, MI 49047

Role	Member	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Nov	Dec
Solid Waste Facility Operator	Bob Kras	IP	A	IP	IP	E	IP	IP	E			
Hauler	Christopher Phillips (Vice-Chair)	IP	E	IP	IP	A	IP	E	IP			
Materials Recovery Facility Operator	Donovan Kelley		IP	E	IP	A	E	E	IP			
Composting Facility Operator	Adam Brent								IP			
Waste Diversion, Reuse, Reduction Facility Operator	Sheila Bergen				IP	IP	IP	IP	A			
Environmental Interest Group	Kalli Marshall (Chair)	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP			
Elected Township Official	David Kuhn	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP			
Elected City/Village Official	Deah Muth	IP	IP	V	IP	V	IP	E	IP			
Business that generates Managed Materials	Al Pscholka	IP	IP	E	E	A	E	IP	A			
Regional Planning Agency	John Egelhaaf	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP			
Sovereign Nation	Jennifer Kanine	IP	IP	IP	V	A	IP	IP	IP			
Berrien County												
Elected County or Municipal Official	Dave Vollrath	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP			
Business that Generates Managed Materials	Jeff Doroh	IP	IP	IP	E	A	IP	IP	E			
Cass County												
Elected County or Municipal Official	Roseann Marchetti (Secretary)	IP	IP	E	IP	IP	IP	IP	IP			
Business that Generates Managed Materials	Amy Huser	IP	IP	IP	IP	E	IP	IP	IP			
Van Buren County												
Elected County or Municipal Official	Kurt Doroh							IP	IP			
Business that Generates Managed Materials	Robert Baran	IP	IP	A	IP	IP	IP	IP	A			
IP - Present in Person; V - Participating remotely; E- Excused absence; A - Unexcused absence; A blank spot means the position is vacant												

Public Present

Wallace, Mandy
Krcmarik, Jeff
Carlisle, Aubree
O'Brien, Mindy
Wallace, Benjamin
Sgriccia, Paul
Ganus, Tyler

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Kalli Marshall called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Role call was taken, and it was established that a quorum was present.

2. Approval of Agenda

Chair Marshall made an amendment to add “Letter of support for Cocoa Compost” to the agenda under New Business. Kurt Doroh moved to **“ACCEPT THE AGENDA.”** Roseann Marchetti seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

3. Approval of July 21, 2025 Minutes

Roseann Marchetti moved to **“APPROVE JULY 21, 2025 MINUTES AS AMENDED.”** Dave Vollrath seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

4. Old Business

Public Survey Approval and Timeline

Bekah Schrag presented the draft of the public survey, with changes that were made at the last meeting. She mentioned that the survey should be available to the public for a minimum of 30 days, but more time would be ideal to capture more responses. She also suggested that the survey not be released until after the press release for the working groups in order to not compete with it. Discussion continued about having the survey available to the public for three months; from October 1 to December 31, 2025 in order to expand possible distribution methods.

Methods for distributing the survey include a press release to media contacts in the region, the creation of a QR code, a flyer that can be posted on bulletin boards, a social media graphic that can be posted to County websites, information to include in tax bills, and flyers for posting at parks and libraries. Kurt Doroh mentioned that he has contacts at numerous municipalities and could push the survey out to them to send to their residents.

A motion was made by Roseann Marchetti to **“APPROVE THE PUBLIC SURVEY FOR DISTRIBUTION BEGINNING OCTOBER 1.”** Kurt Doroh seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Bylaws Update

Schrag presented the two suggested changes for the bylaws. The first suggested change is to the attendance policy, which now reads that a member is considered to

have abandoned their seat if they miss 4 or more meetings in a *12-month rolling period*.

The second change to the bylaws is to omit the sentence in the Sub-committee section so there are no standing committees, and add a section called “Working Groups” to help distribute some of the tasks for the committee. Discussion continued about whether members of the working groups would be paid a stipend, and it was suggested to pay these members the same per diem as the committee members. Concerns were voiced about finding members for the group, and the time commitment required for these working groups. .

Deah Muth made a motion to “**APPROVE THE BYLAW CHANGES AS AMENDED TO INCLUDE A STIPEND FOR THE WORKING GROUPS AT THE SAME RATE AS THE COMMITTEE.**” Chris Phillips seconded the motion. A role call vote was taken. No members voted against the changes.

5. Hearings

Landfill Operations

Chris Phillips presented on landfill operations, focusing on Best Way Disposal’s Orchard Hill Landfill. Constructed in 1979, the landfill now spans 283 acres, including ponds and outbuildings. A new landfill cell was recently completed, which is a two-year construction process. During construction, Best Way works with the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), maintaining an on-site presence to ensure compliance.

The construction of a new cell begins with a base layer of clay soils, followed by at least two feet of sand and a leachate collection system. A 60-mil liner is then welded across the entire surface, after which another two feet of sand and a second pipe system are added. To prevent damage to the liner, the first 10 feet of waste consist of municipal and residential trash. Leachate collected from the landfill is pumped into a storage tank, where it is either hauled to a treatment facility or processed on-site through reverse osmosis.

Environmental monitoring is a key component of operations. Leachate is monitored in-house and groundwater is monitored by a third-party organization. There are also methane probes outside the cells to monitor methane leaks. The site also has approximately 300 gas wells that collect methane and transport it to the on-site gas-to-energy facility. There, Caterpillar engines convert methane into electricity, producing up to 1.6 MW of energy that is fed into the grid. Excess methane is flared

as needed. If any system issue arises, on-call Best Way employees are notified, and if the problem is not resolved within 30 minutes, the methane is flared. This process is classified as biomass energy, considered a form of green energy.

Day-to-day landfill operations require a 100-by-100-foot working area. Trash is dumped in this area and compacted using an 80,000- to 100,000-pound compactor, which reduces volume and punctures materials that could otherwise cause explosions. At the end of each day, the working area is covered—typically with six inches of topsoil in colder months or with a concrete spray cover that allows operations to resume the following day. Over time, materials in the landfill decompose, generating methane that feeds into the collection system and is used to produce energy.

Food Waste Diversion from Landfills

Abree Carlisle of EGLE gave a presentation on food waste in the United States, with a particular focus on its role in landfill operations and emissions. She reported that 30–40% of all food produced in the U.S. is never eaten, representing an annual loss of more than \$300 billion, or about \$3,000 for an average family of four. This level of waste occurs even while 15.4% of Michiganders face food insecurity, highlighting the social and economic impacts alongside the environmental concerns.

Food waste is one of the largest contributors to landfill methane emissions. Carlisle explained that an estimated 58% of fugitive methane emissions from landfills come directly from food waste. Unlike many other landfill materials, food waste decomposes rapidly, and much of the methane it produces is released before landfill gas collection systems can be fully installed or expanded. According to the EPA, approximately 61% of methane generated by food waste in landfills is not captured. While overall methane emissions from municipal solid waste landfills have declined in recent years due to improvements in gas collection, the emissions specifically attributable to food waste continue to rise.

Carlisle presented that methane accounts for roughly 11% of global greenhouse gas emissions and is more effective than carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the atmosphere. Current methane and biogas capture systems in landfills are not efficient in addressing emissions from food waste, particularly because of the speed at which food decomposes. As a result, landfilling food waste is increasingly recognized as an unsustainable practice. It does not promote a circular economy, shortens the useful life of landfill space, and has negative effects on land, water, air, and nearby communities.

She also emphasized that diverting food waste provides multiple benefits: extending the operational lifespan of landfills, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and creating opportunities for more sustainable waste management. Strategies include food donation and recovery programs, feeding animals, and processing food waste through anaerobic digestion or composting. Composting in particular prevents organics from entering landfills while producing nutrient-rich soil, improving resilience against flooding and drought, reducing atmospheric carbon, and serving as an alternative to chemical fertilizers. Carlisle noted that residential waste is a major driver of the problem, with about 21% of household trash made up of food scraps.

Jeff Krcmarik then discussed food waste reduction goals, recommending community engagement, expanded partnerships, municipal support, and increased food scrap collection. He also encouraged waste prevention in commercial settings, reduction in schools, and investment in innovative technologies. EGLE provides grants to help communities build infrastructure and achieve these goals.

6. New Business

Chair Marshall presented the letter of support for Cocoa Corp. for their compost facility in Benton Township. The facility is in process of obtaining a permit and needs support from the Township. Schrag wrote a letter to provide to the Township board stating the future needs of organics management in the region to achieve regional and state goals.

Deah Muth moved to “**SUBMIT A LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR COCOA CORP.**” Kurt Doroh seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Adam Brent abstained from voting.

8. Public Comment

Mindy O’Brien, St. Joseph, Berrien County, emphasized the importance of education to reduce contamination in both recycling and organics. She also mentioned that behavior change is easier if access is easy, such as curbside.

9. Miscellaneous

Schrag requested that members of the public sign in before leaving.

10. Adjournment

Deah Muth moved to adjourn the meeting. Roseann Marchetti supported the motion. Chair Marshall declared the meeting adjourned at 2:46 pm.

Submitted by:

Bekah Schrag

August 31, 2025