# Compostable Products Advisory Committee Meeting

## Meeting #1: Monday, October 2, 2023 | 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Location: Zoom

# Attendance

Members of the Advisory Council, Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology), Cascadia Consulting Group (Cascadia), and the public attended the meeting.

24 out of 26 Advisory Committee members attended:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name | Affiliation |  | Name | Affiliation |
| Alex Truelove | BPI |  | **Mark Chidester** | City of Richland |
| Amy Clow | WSDA |  | **Reingard Rieger** | Tilth Alliance |
| Brandon Houskeeper | Northwest Grocery Association |  | **Ron Jones** | City of Olympia |
| Chris Averyt | City of Spokane |  | **Samantha Louderback** | Washington Hospitality Association |
| Dan Corum | City of Tacoma |  | **Samantha Winkle** | Silver Springs |
| Gena Jain | City of Kirkland |  | **Scott Deatherage** | Barr-Tech |
| Heather Trim | Zero Waste Washington |  | **Shannon Pinc** | NatureWorks |
| Janet Thoman | CMA |  | **Travis Dutton** | WSAC |
| Jay Blazey | Cedar Grove |  | **Wendy Weiker** | Recology |
| Jenny Slepian | Eco Products |  | **Peter Rogalsky** | City of Richland |
| Kate Kurtz | City of Seattle |  | **Zonell Tateishi** | Yakima County |
| Liv Johansson | WORC |  |  |  |

5 Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) members attended:

* Peter Lyon
* Mary Harrington
* Chery Sullivan
* Julie Robertson
* Cullen Naumoff

4 staff from Cascadia Consulting Group (Cascadia) attended as meeting facilitators and support:

* Gretchen Muller
* Hannah Swee
* Taylor Magee
* Brent Edgar

3 members of the public attended.

# Meeting goals

* Introduce the advisory committee to each other and confirm community agreements.
* Walk through the key RCW70A.205.720 requirements and collect initial input on key components of draft operating procedures, including project timelines.
* Begin to develop a shared vision for compostable products management in WA state.
* Establish next steps, action items, and future meeting times for the group.

# Agenda

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Duration | Agenda Item |
| 30 min | Welcome, Introductions, & Community Agreements |
| 30 min | Advisory Committee Overview & Draft Operating Procedures |
| 50 min | Building a Collective Vision |
| 10 min | Closing Remarks and Preview Next Steps |

# Welcome and Introductions

## Icebreaker

Gretchen introduced the icebreaker activity, where members would reply to the question in the chat: **What is your favorite and least favorite compostable product?** Key themes from the answers are:

* **Favorite compostable products** included food waste, coffee grounds, easily compostable products, and generally any item that provided nutrients.
* **Least favorite compostable products** included cutlery, complicated food service packing, non-food related items, compostable bags, and PLA.

## Draft Community Agreements

Gretchen introduced the draft community agreements which will work to facilitate efficient and collaborate meeting space. **The agreements are as follows:**

* Treat other workgroup members, facilitation team, and Ecology staff with respect
* Allow one person to speak at a time and listen actively to others
* Come to workgroup meetings with an open mind
* Intend no malice with what you say, assume no malice in what you hear
* Represent your interests and those of your constituents; don’t disagree just to disagree
* Be present and engaged throughout the meeting
* Come prepared to use meeting time productively
* Assume best intent

Group members shared the following comments regarding the draft community agreements:

* Samantha L. requested clarification on the “don’t disagree just to disagree” agreement, to which Gretchen replied it’s meant to ensure productive conversations, so members should bring forward points in a productive manner rather than just to disagree with fellow advisory members.
	+ Mary replied that if members disagree with a point, they should offer an alternative to work from rather than just disagreeing.
* Heather commented that she would like a list of panelists affiliations, which Gretchen replied will be included in the meeting summary.

### Advisory Committee Overview and Draft Procedures

##### Overview of RCW70A.205.720

Chery from Ecology gave an overview of the RCW70A.205.720 which looks to lower methane emissions primarily by developing standards for compostable product management:

* Through RCW70A.205.720, the Advisory Committee was established and a third-party facilitator (Cascadia) was hired.
* The Advisory Committee will use these meetings to conduct research and develop consensus-based recommendations for compostable product management in Washington state.
* The group will report their findings to the legislature by **September 15, 2024.**

Questions from the Advisory Committee included:

* Kate commented that the RCW outlines 10 topics that we must discuss and asked if that prohibits other topics of conversation.
	+ Chery replied that it does not prohibit other conversations, rather allows the group to stay on track.
* Dan asked what is meant by consensus-based decision-making.
	+ Gretchen replied that the committee is looking for majority consensus to move decisions forward rather than unanimous consensus.
* Brandon noted that he serves on another compostables committee, which Ecology also participates in, and was curious about the differences between the two efforts.
	+ Chery commented that this Committee effort is singularly focused on compostable products and may inform upcoming legislation, whereas the other group Brandon referred to is broader.
* Heather asked to discuss the classifications and composition of the Advisory Committee and noted that her organization (Zero Waste WA) is improperly classified as an association. She also asked about why certain organizations weren’t part of this conversation.
	+ Mary commented that the Association of WA Businesses declined to join the group at this time.
		- **UPDATE POST MEETING**: **The Association of WA Businesses** will be joining the Advisory Committee, **Zero Waste Washington** was moved to the non-profit category and **Washington Refuse and Recycling (WRRA)** was invited and confirmed to be the second association representing organic materials recycling or composting.
		- An updated list of the AC can be found [here](https://www.ezview.wa.gov/Portals/_1962/Documents/CPAC/1033%20Advisory%20Committee_PDF_10.6.2023.pdf).
	+ Regarding classifications, Mary shared that Ecology recruited and invited Advisory Committee members based on the groups identified by the legislation. These classifications will not play a role in the actual work of the Advisory Committee.
	+ Samantha L. expressed concern about a potential gap in perspective from WA Association of Businesses (as listed in the AC members). Samantha also asked for more clarity on what consensus means for our group.
		- Gretchen replied that we are looking for majority consensus, and we will expand on this later in the meeting.

##### Draft Operating Procedures

Gretchen reviewed key operating procedure elements for the group: roles and responsibilities, a decision-making framework, and a schedule of meetings.

The group then participated in a MURAL Board activity, answering questions related to operating procedures. The first question was: **Think of a process when you had to make a decision as a group. What is something that worked well? What is something you would like to avoid?**

* Things that worked well for members included:
	+ Establishing a team leader role
	+ Having everything in writing and allowing time to review written items throughout the process
	+ Including a minority report
	+ Establishing clear definitions from the start
	+ Allowing everyone to have a say and prioritizing hearing from all members (round robin style)
	+ Remaining mindful of the context and purpose of discussion
	+ Finding commonality among the group
	+ Small-group discussions
	+ Directly follow the legislature and remain in scope
	+ Validate committee members and remind them that their feelings are validated
* Items members stated they wish to avoid included:
	+ Retaliation and attacking fellow committee members' ideas
	+ Restricting creativity and shooting down ideas

The second question was: **What are key considerations you would like us to keep in mind as we continue to draft the operating procedures?** Answers were:

* Opportunities to bring in outside experts and guest speakers
* Avoiding dominance by a few and seeking quieter voices
* Maintaining clear definitions
* Keeping product and end goals in mind throughout the process
* Encourage committee members to review and confirm written materials

### Building a Collective Vision

##### Discussion

Gretchen asked members to answer the following question either in the chat or by raising the hand: **Why does management of compostable products and organic material matter to you? What brings you to the table?** General themes from the discussion were:

* Reduce food waste in landfill and increase diversion rate, without contributing to the contamination problem
* Providing education to community members to reduce confusion about compostable products
* Integrity of composition of composted soil
* Necessity of compostable products to reducing contamination and reducing waste
* Ensuring that composting facilities are not treated as transfer stations and keeping finished products clean and free of plastics and contamination

##### Activity

Gretchen introduced an activity called “1-2-4-all" wherein members will answer a prompt individually, then as a pair, then as a group of four, before sharing with the entire committee. Due to technical difficulties, we had to pivot to 1-9-all, but the same principles applied. The prompt was**: What vision or end result will this Advisory Committee build toward to best manage compostable products?** Key themes from small group discussions were:

* Develop standards to achieve consensus
* Financial support for desired future state
* Facility capacity and support
* Standardization across organizations and the state of WA
* Vision for the report, including what’s working and what isn’t working.
* Flexibility for all stakeholders across the chain, functional framework
* Education and enforcement
* Cost considerations
* Diverse and impactful perspectives in this Advisory Committee
* Who will bear the burden of tackling these issues

### Next Steps and Action Items

Next steps from this meeting are:

* The meeting summary and meeting notes will be uploaded for the committee to view and provide comments and corrections.
* A poll will be sent to establish monthly meeting times.
	+ Heather commented that since most of the committee are lobbyists, it may be best to skip the month of February entirely.
	+ Gretchen requested additional scheduling concerns via email.

Meeting #2 will broadly cover:

* Review and determine operating procedures.
* Continue to build a collective vision around end results and understand gaps.
* Review and discuss schedule of research topics and discuss supporting research.