

SOECA Membership Meeting 2026-02-23

Video Link: https://youtu.be/WX_9wfeJtrg

Quick recap

The February meeting focused on recycling and waste management in Montgomery County, featuring a presentation by Alan Pultyniewicz from the Department of Environmental Protection. Alan explained the county's recycling programs, including the collection of food scraps in pilot areas, and discussed upcoming initiatives to expand countywide food scrap collection. He addressed questions about recycling guidelines, including what can be placed in blue bins and how to handle specific items like plastic containers and batteries. The meeting also covered updates on school construction projects, with Angie providing information on the status of SSIMS and Sligo Creek Elementary schools. Paula Bienenfeld announced her candidacy for County Council in District 4. The conversation ended with a brief discussion of an upcoming SOECA St. Patrick's Day Happy Hour at Urban Winery.

Meeting Summary

The meeting began with informal discussions about the weather and a recent town hall event. Chris introduced Alan Poltenowitz from the Department of Environmental Protection, who would be presenting on garbage, recycling, and the food scraps pilot program.

Alan, the Chief of Recycling and Refuse Services, provided an overview of Montgomery County's recycling program, highlighting the county's coverage of single-family households and the differences in trash and recycling services between Sub-Districts A and B. He explained that new 35-gallon wheeled carts for glass/plastic recycling are available for residents who wish to upgrade from the 18- or 22-gallon bins, and detailed the types of materials accepted in the recycling program, including mixed paper, bottles, cans, etc. Alan also mentioned the addition of electronic items and household batteries to the recycling program.

Alan provided detailed guidance on recycling commingled materials, explaining that plastic spouts and windows on paper packaging can remain attached, while bottle caps should be removed and placed in the plastic recycling bin. He clarified that most plastic containers with numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 are recyclable, except for number 6 plastics and those labeled "compostable." Alan also addressed Diana's question about cleaning difficult-to-empty containers like mayonnaise jars, recommending a thorough scrape and light rinse before recycling. They do not have to be fully clean to be recyclable.

Alan provided information on recycling programs, including the collection of yard trim, food containers, and scrap metal. He explained that yard trim can be placed in paper lawn bags or reusable containers with yard trim stickers for curbside collection. Alan also discussed the drop-off options at the Shady Grove Transfer Station for items like bulky plastics and the

acceptance of various materials such as motor oil, tires, textiles, bicycles, plastic bags, electronic items, batteries, and medical equipment. He emphasized the importance of scheduling scrap metal collections by calling 311 and mentioned that residents outside of the food scraps pilot program area use public drop-off bins at the Silver Spring Farmers' Market.

Alan discussed Montgomery County's recycling programs, including drop-off locations for various materials such as. He highlighted the expansion of curbside collection services for electronics and batteries, which became countywide on December 1st. Alan also mentioned the "Recycle Right" campaign launched in 2019 to reduce contamination of recycling bins, and encouraged residents to use the county website for recycling information.

Alan explained that plastic bags and films cannot be recycled through curbside pickup due to equipment entanglement risks, but residents can drop them off at transfer stations or participating retailers. Alan highlighted the success of the county's food scraps pilot program, which has collected over 1.94 million pounds of food scraps since November 2021. The program aims to expand countywide once processing capacity is established. Alan also discussed the economics of food scraps collection, noting that the county currently pays about \$16 per household for processing at a facility in Prince George's County. The goal is to develop county-owned processing facilities to reduce costs and generate revenue from compost sales.

The meeting covered several topics related to recycling and waste management in Montgomery County. Alan explained the textile recycling program and discussed challenges with plastic film recycling. He clarified that electronics and battery collections do not count against bulk trash collection limits. Elicia John raised concerns about plastic bottle recycling at businesses, and Alan confirmed that businesses are required to provide recycling bins. The group discussed food scrap recycling at farmer's markets. Chris praised Montgomery County's recycling efforts compared to neighboring areas. Paula Bienenfeld announced her candidacy for County Council. Angie Kronenberg provided updates on school issues, including the status of SSIMS and Sligo Creek Elementary schools and potential repairs. The conversation ended with a reminder about an upcoming SOECA Happy hour gathering on St. Patrick's Day at Urban Winery.