

Facilitator: Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First

Note Taker: Xavier Vallejo, New Mexico First

Speakers:

- Jill Holbert, Solid Waste Department
- Sarah Pierpont, New Mexico Recycling Coalition

Welcome

- **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** For those who have not had a chance to meet me yet, I am the President and Executive Director of New Mexico First. You received an email reminder before the call. If you have any additional information you'd like to share, our team will be keeping a log of all comments, to include those resources for the rest of the group to access. Comments can be submitted by both task members and the general public, via email to: cabqclimatecomments@nmfirst.org.
- The 10.14.20 CABQ Climate Action Task Force Meeting Minutes were shared last week. Are there any edits that need to be made to the standing minutes before we officially approve them?
 - **Sharon Hausam:** In the values discussion, I had mentioned place. I had referred to the values of the places that we come from, rather than the geographic distribution of those places.
 - A motion was moved and seconded to approve the minutes with the changes recommended by Sharon Hausam.

Jill Holbert Presentation

- **Jill Holbert:** I am the Associate Director of the Solid Waster Department. Two year ago, China banned imports of US recycling materials. Previously, they had been a major market for recycling materials internationally. The attention then shifted to other Southeast Asian countries to take these materials. This created a clot in the market because all of that material had to go somewhere and there were limited resources to process those materials in the US.
- Before, the recycling collection vehicles would pick up and transfer recycling materials to US-based recycling processing facilities. The material would then be sorted to remove contaminants and send the sorted materials to China for further processing. Standard recycling material gathered by recycling collection vehicles is commonly comprised of 31% contaminants. After sorting, Chinese processing plants would accept materials comprised of 5-7% contaminants. Due to high international demand, those Chinese processing plants are now able to be more selective and now only accept materials comprised of 0.5% contaminants. This complicates the process within US-based recycling processing facilities, to meet standards required by Chinese processing plants and contributed to US landfills.
- Recycling audits are conducted each year, by the City of Albuquerque to evaluate the intake of collected materials. Mixed Papers comprise 37.63% of collected materials, Non-Recyclables comprise 31.55% of collected materials, and Old Corrugated Containers comprise 20.60% of collected materials.
- The most valuable recyclable materials are Plastic #2 and Aluminum. The most collected materials tend to have the lowest recyclable value. The collection of recycled materials has significantly grown since the establishment of the Friedman Contract. This includes the adopted action items from the 2009 Climate Action Plan. Recently, the revenue loss associated with recycling programs have increased, due to demand.

CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE – CLIMATE ACTION TASK FORCE MINUTES – 10.20.20

- There is hope for recycling. There have been big investments in domestic paper and plastic recycling. This city is working to minimize contamination and educate citizens about what goes in to recycling. Recycling contaminants include plastic bags, clothes/linens, garbage, food/liquids, tangle materials, and green waste. We need to educate the community on how to recycle right. Albuquerque experiences 31% contamination; Las Cruces experiences 25% contamination; El Paso experiences 28% contamination; Phoenix experiences 43% contamination.
- Albuquerque has developed a program to educate community members by posting educational materials at drop off sites and having interns distribute flyers. We try to change behaviors on site and ask people to unbag recyclable materials.
- Cerro Colorado is the active city landfill. The site emits a significant amount of greenhouse emissions, due to rotting garbage. The city is going to be closing off portions of the landfill that are not being used. We are going to be mulching the city's green waste and using it to cover 66 acres of the landfill with 6 inches of material as part of a cap over portions of the landfill. Mulch has been scientifically proven to reduce greenhouse emissions because of bacteria that absorbs the released methane.
- Albuquerque offers two days for green waste collection a year: one in the Spring and one in the Fall. The Fall green waste collection date is scheduled for November 30 through December 11. That waste is mulched and used for projects like the Cerro Colorado Landfill. At home composting is another option to dispose of green waste – this is the preferred method because not trucks are use to collect the material and no fossil fuels are burnt. The city offers classes to teach people how to properly compost.
- There are some things you can do going forward: remember the top 6 recycling contaminants, utilize the app Recycle Coach, and educate your family and friends.

Sarah Pierpont Presentation

- **Sarah Pierpont:** I am the Executive Director of the New Mexico Recycling Coalition. I will talk about some similar things that Jill talked about. When we consider the Discards Hierarchy, we've got the 5 R's: Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, and Recycle. All are important steps in the recycling process.
- The coalition is a statewide nonprofit. Since China's ban, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Las Cruces have all agreed to pay more for domestic processing. As of now, those costs have not been passed on to the consumer – community members. We are proud of those cities. In rural parts of the state, other communities have begun to restrict what they accept for processing. For example, Taos no longer accepts plastic as a recyclable material and only has a recycling program is only guaranteed through the end of the calendar year, so that need to figure that out. Moriarty and the East Mountain Areas are only accepting aluminum and cardboard right now. Silver City and Carlsbad have completely ended their recycling programs – This is mainly because of China's ban, but also dependent on volume of recyclable materials.
- Zero Waste is a goal that is ethical, economical, efficient and visionary, to guide people in changing their lifestyles and practices to emulate sustainable natural cycles, where all discarded materials are designed to become resources for others to use. Zero Waste means designing and managing products and processes to systematically avoid and eliminate the volume and toxicity of waste and materials, conserve and recover all resources, and not burn or bury them. Implementing Zero Waste will eliminate all discharges to land, water or air that are a threat to planetary, human, animal or plant health.
- As a starting point on zero waste, a large portion of our waste that ends up in landfills can easily be composted. Starting you own backyard compost program is highly recommended. There are

CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE – CLIMATE ACTION TASK FORCE MINUTES – 10.20.20

organizations that help with eliminating waste. [Little Green Bucket](#) is a company that can hull food scraps and takes that waste to another company called [Soilutions](#), which used that waste to create compost you can use at home. This will help to eliminate the 31% of contaminants present in recycled materials.

- We need to rethink the way we manage waste. We need to keep recycling clean and change the types of items we have as consumers. There is a lot we can do on the individual level and they are very important, but its not enough to address the current climate issue alone. We need to rethink the process at the systemic level and consider what large corporations can do to make their products more recycling friendly. Some of the top polluters include Coca Cola, Pepsi Co, and Nestle. We need to consider Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) as a mandatory type of product stewardship that includes, at a minimum, the requirement that the producer’s responsibility for their product extends to post-consumer management of that product and its packaging. 32 states have already implemented legislation to enforce the approach.
- Shell has created a plant in Pennsylvania to make plastic. We want to stray away from making new plastics and reuse what we have already made. 8 states have banned single use plastics. In New Mexico, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Silver City have all implemented some sort of ban on single use plastic. Other cities like Carlsbad and Las Cruces have begun to explore the idea of bans. Individuals businesses can also implement important changes.
- Earlier this year, Senator Udall introduced the Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act, a comprehensive piece of legislation with 32 co-authors that is focused on recycling. The piece of legislation focuses on sources reduction and implements fees for using one use plastic bags, utensils, etc. It would also have developed a producer responsibility organization to oversee all recyclable materials. It also creates demand by requiring producers to use a larger percentage of reused plastic provide less incentives for using virgin materials to make plastics. The act bans exports of plastic waste and puts a three year pause for new plastic plants to be created. When plastics break down they create nurdles, which severely pollute water ways.

Guest Speaker Q&A

- Would we have a more successful recycling program if we accepted glass? I have been told that glass is one of the more recyclable programs.
 - Albuquerque accepts glass separately at drop off sites. That is the current trend across the country is to get glass out of the comingle. They are getting them out now because it can create more contamination. If we were to pick up glass, we would have to send another truck and investing in another truck can contribute to greenhouse emissions. We do not have a glass recycling plant in New Mexico, so we are sending our glass to Phoenix and Denver to be made into fiber glass and new glass bottles.
- Composting. You have shown that 30% of waste is made of compostable material. Would that be worth creating a third bin for to collect that waste and further direct compost.
 - We are open to your recommendations. Whether you want the city to do it or a private company to do it. Whether its green waste or food waste. It is something that we are open to explore.
- We stress that we need local markets for something to be recyclable. The reason we initially recycled glass was because we had a company that was able to use the recycled glass. Is that firm still here and if they are no longer here, was there anything done to try to keep them here?

CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE – CLIMATE ACTION TASK FORCE MINUTES – 10.20.20

- Yes, when the firm was here, we used them. They went out of business and we took over all of their assets. We are waiting to ask people if they want to use that space for individual recycling purposes or if we should sell those items.
- One of the things mentioned was fix-it clinics. Are there local business opportunities out of these clinics, to implement more permanent fixtures?
 - The City of Albuquerque implemented the first fix-it clinic last fall and another one has been scheduled in the Spring. These serve to empower people to know how to repair things and keep things from ending up in the landfill. These programs will be expanded into the rural parts of New Mexico with a grant.
- Contamination. I struggle prioritizing whether I should wash recyclable goods, knowing that there is a water shortage in New Mexico, and we live in an increasingly arid environment. What do you recommend?
 - If you can clean something with a rubber spatula and get more of whatever is in there, out, that is probably good enough. If you are not able to clean something out, it might be better that you throw it out altogether, rather than put it in recycling dirty because we will throw it out. You can also collect hand washing water and use that water to clean out your recyclable goods.
- You have shown us a map of the state with information on the different recycling programs. Is there any way to implement recycling programs are a state, rather than city by city?
 - That is an issue nationwide. Items are recyclable in some places, but not others depending the local capacity to process those items. Statewide, we do have the Environmental Department: Solid Waste Bureau, to support local efforts. Inconsistencies exist on where different cities take their recycled materials to be processed. In the near future, it seems unlikely to be able to do something like this, but I think it would be good to make things uniform. The biggest barrier is funding because all these programs receive funding from different sources.
 - I do not think we could be successful with only one processing center in the state. We would need several them in a state our size.
- Does the degradation of plastics to form nurdles eliminate plastic as far as being a recyclable material?
 - Yes and no. Plastic is not infinitely recyclable. Our goal is to create a circular economy, where everything can be reused. Plastic recycling creates a loop within that system, but it does not exist now for us to have a full circular economy. Plastic does degrade and cannot be infinitely recycled. However, it is better to recycle plastic that is already there. The best thing is to reduce and reuse.
 - The same thing goes for paper. Paper can be reused for things like toilet paper or paper towels. Glass does hold its shape, but unfortunately, we do not have a glass manufacturer in New Mexico. Glass can be recycled infinitely.

Homework Survey

- **Erika Robers:** Thank you everybody who completed the homework survey. These surveys will serve to give us extra input going forward and ensure you all are getting what you need.
- **Homework Survey Results**

Question 1: What did you hear today that inspires you?

- Amazing individuals that are part of the group and working on climate change- commitment, dedication, enthusiasm, diversity, equity, accountability, and compassion.

CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE – CLIMATE ACTION TASK FORCE MINUTES – 10.20.20

- Diverse group of people on the task force.
- “It wasn’t what I heard that inspired me as much as the people who are involved! Truly amazing group of people.”

Question 2: What did you learn today that was new for you?

- Length of time so many groups have been working on climate justice.
- Nothing new yet.
- Wide variety of groups working on Climate Change in ABQ.
- That ABQ is on track for 80% renewable energy by 2021.
- The GHG plateau between 2007 and 2017.

Question 3: Which part of the survey results surprised you?

- Disappointed that more youth had not taken part in the survey.
- Happy to see the large number of people who responded to the survey.
- Surprised at the high number of respondents who objected to ART.
- Surprised and disappointed that there were a disproportionate number of white and higher income survey respondents.
- Surprised that there was not more support for public transit.
- Surprised that there was not a higher number of Latino respondents.
- Low number of low-income folks.
- Lack of ethnic diversity of people.
- Surprised that the most popular response to improving neighborhoods was increase in vegetation- wonders if that is skewed due to higher income participants or because the pandemic has us focused on outdoor spaces.

Question 4: Which part of the survey results affirmed your beliefs?

- “The importance of connecting more with the outdoors through improvement to paths and vegetation, which were 2 of the top 3 priorities.”
- “Mostly middle-aged white people fill out surveys. We need to find more methods to get input.”
- That those most marginalized in our society are the ones least likely to provide feedback- need better and more varied types of outreach.
- It is progress that a majority of respondents said they feel that they can make a difference with climate change.
- There is a disconnect between what BIPOC people are organizing around climate justice and what the white privileged populations think the city should do on climate change.
- Importance of listening with open hearts and minds to all sectors.
- Sidewalks need improvement.
- Reassured that there is support for better transit through improved bike infrastructure and better, more frequent public transit.
- Safety was an emphasis.

Question 5: How can we best support you on this task force?

- Flexibility.
 - Provide information in a timely manner (need at least 24-48 hours in advance to get homework done).
 - Provide healthy communication during sessions.
 - Utilize surveys for feedback.
 - Feels supported.
 - More open time to discuss and share our expertise.
 - Transparency in terms of what the city faces politically in taking on climate change as well as what the city has already been planning to do before the task force.
 - “This represents a huge step forward but is right now operating within the framework of combined national crises. Because of the tensions and fears that each of us carries into the forum, I hope that we begin each meeting with a brief recognition of the common purpose that binds us, and that we end each meeting with an affirmation that together we can address concerns that have tied our area into an inflexible, inequitable, and unjust cycle, which can be reshaped if we continue working together.”
 - Occasional reminders of the big picture and what we’re trying to accomplish as a TF.
 - “Just keep it real, addressing root cause effects of Climate Change and Global warming. That means addressing Fracking and our oil and our gas revenue state along with unhealthy economic development that demand consumption of NM resources; land development, water, and energy resources aside from receiving tax breaks. I do not want to produce a sugar-coated report. Especially regarding equity in climate action and racial justice!”
 - Continue to support strategies that will reduce GHG emissions.
- **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** The survey results collected represent a step in the right direction, but so much more can be done. The survey had its limitations, but this task force is meant to expand upon those limitations.

Discussions

- **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** Based on the information you have heard so far, is there anything about the 5 R’s that strike you as being good ideas or solutions for your neighborhoods and your communities? What did you hear that holds promise?
- One of the things that is interesting is the idea of composting at a community level. The city pick up it too infrequent and many people don’t always have the information they need to take advantage of the resource.
- I also like the idea of community composts, but I wanted to include more on recycling. During the presentations, I thought about my communities: the immigrant community and the community in the international zone. I feel like there is a disconnect between the goals to recycle and the realities we live in. Growing up, I was told to recycle, but I never did. I think that it is not a lack of education, but rather not being able to see the benefits of recycling in my community. I think we need to shift away from a recycling department that is based on markets and shift towards something that is community driven. We should consider decentralizing recycling, so communities feel responsible to

CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE – CLIMATE ACTION TASK FORCE MINUTES – 10.20.20

start composting, recycling, etc. This would create jobs within the community and allow for climate mitigation within their own community. In an ideal world, recycling should be shifted to a decentralized, community-based approach to benefit the community itself.

- **Lilly Irvin-Vitela:** After what you heard today, are there any things you would add onto what Jill and Sarah have presented, that would be more impactful in your community? And given our shared commitment about equity, is there anything that gave you pause?
- Equity is something that is always central in my mind. We need to recognize the realities of our communities because they are not all the same. We need to recognize that it is a privilege to be able to adopt a zero-waste lifestyle. As a former teacher, I would see all the educational materials, but the campaign seemed a bit removed from our communities. We also need to increase the reality of emissions and how all this waste and pollution impacts frontline communities. We need to acknowledge who is at the forefront of being affected by these problems. We need to focus on education but be critical about what that education looks like.
- I think we must stay open to thinking outside of the box from the norm. Frontline communities, especially ones in the South Valley, have been the ones finding solutions. We need to make these approaches community based as was previously said. When we consider the idea of local food systems, success has been related to finding connections throughout our immediate communities. Education is not a flyer. When considering equity, equity is not there. In building this, we must think outside of our norms. How can we educate on climate mediation if we do not directly involve our community? There must be a more organic approach to the education and communication pieces.
- Investing in the community is not only a way to create jobs, but also a way to work within communities through community gardens to reduce waste and local hunger. Not everybody has the privilege of having their own yard, or the finances to pay for water, seeds, etc. A community garden could be a place to for folks access those resources to come together.
- Does the recycling plant use prison labor?
 - No, it does not. The city facility used to use prison labor, but that has been closed for several years. Most personnel used by Freedman are temporary and full-time employees.
- Particularly on recycling, I wonder if there are other models that have been successful in encouraging proper recycling. Do we encourage this through the federal or state levels? For example, Styrofoam plates are single use items, but they are highly affordable. Are there any good models of community-based solutions to encourage people not to buy nonrecyclable goods and encourage people to recycle the goods that can be recycled?
 - 1-1 type of engagement can be very effective in encouraging good recycling behavior. You can also ban items, tax items, etc. Santa Fe has banned plastic bags and taxed paper bags.
- We have not talked about the cost of recycling and the increase in recycling as years go by. I am worried that we do not have any legislation, to protect communities from bearing those costs. We have seen this happen in the North Valley with the proposed Waste Transfer Station. I do not want to see that burden placed on a community ever again. We need protections to help communities that can not fight for themselves.
- A regional or community-based approach is always best when trying to address equity. The one thing that gave me pause was the Break Free from Pollution Act. I think that as we have applied the “plastic bag ban” to grocery stores, we need to move further in the direction of focusing on large entities to find solutions (not individuals as much). For example, we can prohibit large institutions from giving away bottled water at meetings and events – if they have a source of potable municipal water like water stations, fountains, and/or alternative containers.

CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE – CLIMATE ACTION TASK FORCE MINUTES – 10.20.20

- I work a lot with my neighborhood association. I think those associations would serve as great starting points for organizing. This method would require a lot of volunteers and may have to be implemented after the pandemic.
- An app is not an effective tool that can be accessed by everyone. We should address recyclability at the point of sale for most products. Producers should be held more accountable. We should also begin to analyze the life cycle of various materials to evaluate the benefits of collecting additional containers and implementing a glass day pick up, where one day a month, the city collect glass from the curb side. Trash collection vehicles could be transitioned to electric to eliminate emissions.
 - The city has not done an analysis on glass. Glass while its recycled infinitely is also a low-cost virgin product. It's already really cheap to make it without recycled material. It can be a difficult product to manage unless you have a glass manufacturer in your backyard, like Denver or Phoenix.
 - There are garbage trucks that are electric, but they are in their pilot stage and do not have great range. Later in the Task Force Meeting Series, we will be discussing more in depth about electric fleets next week. We are seeing that heavy duty vehicles: buses, trucks, etc. Those vehicles are not able to service the routes in the same way. Electric vehicles are not where we need them to be just yet.
- The couple of things that I would like to recommend cost money and I recognize that with the pandemic, our state is very short on financial resources. We need to consider how to make things more visual for people who already live busy lives. One idea is to have trash cans with multiple sections, to make recycling more visually apparent and more accessible. Another idea is to have community liaisons for each neighborhood. Each neighborhood needs to find its own solution to recycling.
- There are people in my neighborhood that wish the city would pick up green waste more than twice a year. What is that compost used for? What does the city see the purpose of compose as?
 - The city currently collects green waste and manure from its drop off centers. Those all go to the landfill to be used for landfill projects. None of it is used for local agriculture. The Parks Department works with the Water Authority, which does its own composting.
- I have been thinking about bringing a lot of these ideas together. We need to look to bring education forward to communities in ways that are more accessible. It is not always a flyer or an app – especially if it is not in the language primarily spoken within a community. We need to invest in promotoras and take a relational approach. A lot of people are not in tune with how all of this connects. We need to talk specifically about how all these things fit together. We need to start at the underlying level.
- I think there could be some low hanging fruit around education. We could put low cost stickers on recycling bins, showing the 6 things that should not be recycled. We need to think about how to make things as accessible as possible. Another idea is to share more information on green waste pickups. I never know when those days are. I am a huge fan of more consistent green waste compost. I also think that we should increase the size of glass holding containers at drop off sites.
- I would like to see the Solid Waste Department invest more into education. People need to know what the situation is. We can not put the burden on individual consumers, especially in New Mexico, where people are commonly struggling to get by. Information needs to be more accessible.
- I want to challenge the narrative of the lack of education. I do not think that the question is whether we have the education on recycling. How do you expect people to start using plastic water bottles, when people believe that their water is contaminated by jet fuel from Kirtland Airforce Base? The air force and corporations can pollute, yet communities are expected to recycle. We need to address root causes.

CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE – CLIMATE ACTION TASK FORCE MINUTES – 10.20.20

- How can we continue to increase engagement in these discussions?
 - While posting information on the CABQ and NMF side if things is helpful, we would like to encourage you, as task force members, to invite people and use the power of relationships to help engage folks. Both CABQ and NMF are actively promoting these meetings on social media. For context, organic waste is being produced almost everywhere.
 - [Soilutions](#) is a great example of an organization that varies their approached to gathering organic waste on a county by county basis. Many local farmers work with Soilutions. The company is an LLC, but they invest in keeping employees long-term to invest in relationship building and focus on a community-based approach.

Next Steps

- Please complete the task force homework survey. Use the survey to reflect and expand upon any of the things we talked about during the meeting. Please complete the survey by 12:00 PM on Monday, October 26, 2020.
- There are modest stipends to compensate task force members for their time. Check in with your HR policies. Figure out if it is okay for you to accept an honorarium.
- Please share what you're learning. Please share with your communities. Please share any resources you may have using the email: CABQClimateComments@nmfirst.org.

Public Comment

- **Kevin Bean:** Knowledge is power. The more that people learn about the issues and solutions related to climate change, the more informed they will be during the decision-making process.
- **Bridget Llanes:** I am so happy to be here. This has been such great information. I work for the Bernalillo County Community Health Council and the Urban Ag Extension Committee. I present environmental justice workshops to the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps and Together for Brothers. I am excited to share this work with those organizations. I will be a champion to share this work. I think the recommendation to decentralize recycling is great and even better if jobs can be created for promotoras. I think it would be so important to have compost areas in every neighborhood. This makes me excited because it is something, we are actively working on in Bernalillo County.