



Solid Waste Workshop: Environmental Enforcement
August 26, 2020, 9 a.m.-11 a.m.

AGENDA

- 9:00 a.m. Welcome & Introductions**
Andrea Tantillo, Senior Communications Coordinator, H-GAC
- 9:05 a.m. Textile Recycling: Recovery, Destruction, and Transformation**
Colleen Halbrook, Josco Products
- 9:25 a.m. Composting in Your Community**
Jeff Paine, Break It Down
- 9:45 a.m. Food Banks—Part of the Zero Waste Solution**
John Kreger, Montgomery County Food Bank
- 10:05 a.m. The Building Materials Reuse Warehouse after 10 years: Challenges, Successes, and the Unexpected**
Keith Koski, City of Houston Building Materials ReUse Warehouse
- 10:25 a.m. Questions, Discussion, & Announcements and Adjourn**

The next Solid Waste Workshop will be Thursday, November 19. The topic is TBD.

Colleen Halbrook

Colleen Halbrook joined the family business, JOSCO Products, in 1982. At the time, she was attending St. Edwards University. In 2000, her mom and dad handed over the Presidency and daily operations to her. Ms. Halbrook has been passionate about recycling her whole life starting in grammar school by collecting cans and turning them in to the community recycling center. The business began selling wiping rags to local boat builders in the late 1980's. To grow from being strictly a re-seller of wiping rags to manufacturing them, the family bought their supplier. Ms. Halbrook served on the board of SMART (Secondary Material and Recycled Textiles) from 2007-2011. She actively participated with Austin Resource Recovery in MoveOutATX and [RE]Verse Pitch. Her mission is to spread the gospel that no textiles should go to the landfill before they have reached complete end of life.

Jeff Paine

Jeff Paine co-founded Break it Down in 2009 in Austin and grew the company from two business customers to today providing composting and recycling services for over 800 businesses throughout the greater Austin area. Prior to that, Mr. Paine was a professional graduate student and has Master of Science degrees in both Chemical Engineering and Earth Sciences. He also served on the Zero Waste Advisory Commission at the City of Austin from 2011 to 2015. He is passionate about many things, including the potential to more directly connect composting with agricultural systems.

John Kreger

John Kreger is the Director of Sourcing and Industry Partnerships at the Montgomery County Food Bank. Mr. Kreger has been "food banking" for the last 15 years--11 years at the Houston Food Bank and 4 years at the Montgomery County Food Bank. Rescuing food is what food banks do, but thanks to a grant and partnership with the Dow Corporation, the Montgomery County Food Bank has another tool to rescue and utilize even more fruits and vegetables. In April 2017, the Montgomery County Food Bank started a Produce Rescue Center, and in January 2019 the General Packaging Equipment Company donated a bagging machine allowing the food bank to bag certain produce items, using a Dow engineered film, that extends the shelf life significantly. Therefore, rescuing more fruits and vegetables before they make it to the landfills.

Keith Koski

Keith Koski has worked in architecture and construction for most of his adult life. Like many people, he has witnessed the staggering amount of waste in this industry. In response, he has striven to minimize waste in his projects as much as possible. Since 2009, Mr. Koski has had the privilege to manage the City of Houston Building Materials Reuse Warehouse, a component of the Solid Waste Management Department. The Reuse Warehouse accepts building materials from individuals and companies, diverts the materials from landfills, and gives the materials to non-profit organizations, schools, government agencies, and disaster survivors for free, in any available quantity.

Q&A

How has COVID affected your processes? And what changes are you making/have you made as a result?

Colleen Halbrook: Internally, we ramped up our safety measures. Upon entering, temperature checks and masks required. To accommodate social distancing, it required moving work stations, implementing a new clock-in system, converting the conference room into an additional breakroom and installing plexiglass shields in the front office. As for incoming material, we have continually let customers know what products are available for purchase and which ones are in short supply. There have been price increases due to the lack of materials when the thrift stores were not open for donations. Plus the lack of travel, dining in restaurants and frequenting of bars has greatly reduced supply as well. We have been communicating regularly to set expectations.

Jeff Paine: Because we work with so many restaurants and food establishments, our hauling volume cratered by about 80% initially and our revenue dropped by around 40% (some customers were still paying, but not generating nearly as much volume as they would normally). Levels are rising back up, but it has been a slow recovery and we don't expect to return to normal until probably next Summer.

John Kreger: Food Banks are used to stepping up to disaster relief whenever needed. However, this "disaster" is much different in several ways than what we have dealt with in the past.

Instead of affecting just one area of the country and having the rest of the country to send aid, this one we started out more on our own. For the first 30 to 45 days the food banks were on their own and for many their resources dwindled fast. The demand (for us) almost doubled yet we did not know how we would be able to sustain the increase distributions.

The Montgomery County Food Bank normally conducts around 7 to 8 mobile distributions per month and that along with the day to day distributions at the local pantries filled most of the need. But when the Pandemic hit a lot of our agencies closed so we expanded our monthly mobile distributions to around 25 per month (and serving more families at each one). Also with having to maintain social distancing, we use the drive through distribution model where the food is just loaded into the vehicles as they drive through a line.

Fortunately, the government did step in and help with some disaster funding that allowed the food banks to purchase food and also started a "perishable box program" that delivered pre-assembled boxes of different categories, dairy, produce and frozen meat. Thanks to these programs the availability of food is not a worry at the moment.

Keith Koski: As municipal workers, we were declared essential, so we have stayed open during normal hours. We have a screener who takes temperatures of everyone who enters. Of course, masks and distance are mandatory. One of the security guards contracted covid. We think she is OK. Unfortunately, one of our Deputy Directors passed away due to covid about 3 weeks ago. It was a terrible loss.

Generally, we have received less material than usual, especially from companies, but more residents come in with small batches of material. Many people are stuck at home and have time to renovate

and/or clean out their garages and yards. So we encounter more people and less material during these times. During normal times, we team up to load/unload materials. These days we take turns and maintain distance.

Colleen: I think the economic impact of recycling is a really important story to tell. Could you elaborate on the 7 impacts the used clothes have on the economy?

- 1) Clean out closet – son’s favorite Disneyworld T-shirt – he wore it until he outgrew it
- 2) Donate to favorite thrift store/charity (**# 1 tax deduction**)
- 3) Store determines if it can sell it on the floor
 - a. No – it has a chocolate ice cream stain
- 4) Store sells it to a clothing grader who will determine it’s fate (**#2 thrift store sells to the grader**)
 - a. If good – will be sold a part of a bale for destined for a developing country. Ever seen a kid on Discovery Channel wearing a Disneyworld T-shirt? How likely is it that a child in Kenya sent to Disneyworld? His mom probably bought him a used T-shirt
 - b. If not exportable – will sold to a company like JOSCO (**#3 grader sells to JOSCO**)
- 5) We transform it into a wiping rag (**#4 employees earn paychecks**)
- 6) We sell it to the paint store (**#5 JOSCO sells to paint store**)
- 7) The paint store sells it to the painter (**#6 paint store sells to painter**)
- 8) The painter comes to your house to repaint your bathroom (**#7 painter charges customer for work done and materials**)
- 9) The painter cleans up his mess with your son’s old T-shirt
- 10) The T-shirt has been through the economy 7 times generating revenue before it reaches complete end of life.

Jeff: Education to prevent contamination is always tricky. Do you have any recommendations for where communities could find good educational resources for their residents or some ideas for what the main, streamlined message could/should be?

There's definitely no silver bullet that works to communicate proper source separation. I think part of the strategy needs to be around getting participants to see educational material many times (akin to marketing working to get purchasers to see their brand many times in order to get a sale). There is a lot of information online that can be found through basic searches, so there is certainly no need to re-invent the wheel. I would recommend copying information from other sources as much as possible.

John: If Montgomery County Food Bank distributes most of it’s food through other organizations and groups, is that how other food banks operate too? Also, can you tell us what percent of the food that goes through the facility is perishable vs. non-perishable?

Yes, but since the Covid outbreak, our direct mobile distributions have significantly increased. We will have to see if it will eventually return to “normal” or if this is the “new normal”.

It will change a little bit from month to month, but around 60% of what we receive is perishable.

Keith: What's the hardest item to give away or what do you get the most of? And what's the easiest item to give away?

Great questions.

The hardest items to give away are desks with missing drawers and office cubicles.

There are such large quantities of these items that a reuse/rebuild program just for office furniture is needed.

Custom cut and installed items, like a countertop from a v-shaped bathroom or a custom-sized window are more difficult to reuse. If we see someone using a measuring tape, it indicates they are less likely to find what they need.

The easiest items to give away are big stacks of full length lumber, full sheets of plywood, or anything to make a complete roof. We like to say these items disappear before they ever touch the ground. I receive a lot of requests for these materials.

Generally, materials that are more modular, more useful in many applications, such as concrete blocks, clean bricks, and materials in common sizes, get reused faster.

Doors, drawers, cabinet doors, lights, and ceiling fans are the most frequently donated items. They are the easiest things to pull out of a building at the last minute.

If you have additional question, please reach out to the speakers at:

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