



THE SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA RECYCLERS' EXCHANGE

cooperative marketing * market development * materials exchange

SEMREX JOINT POWERS BOARD (JPB) MEETING

Friday, December 5, 2025

Conference Room B

Dodge County Government Services Building (not the courthouse)

721 Main Street North (on the west side of Highway 57)

Mantorville, MN

9:30 A.M.

AGENDA

9:30 am	Call Meeting to Order – Roll Call and Introductions
9:35 am	Approve June 2025 Minutes
9:40 am	Director's Report– Sharon Schriever, SEMREX • Market Update • Budget Report
10:00 am	2025 Agreements: • Professional Services Agreement • Fiscal Management Agreement
10:10 am	2026 Budget Review & Approval
10:15 am	Olmsted County Materials Recovery Facility Update – Mike Cook
10:30 am	MPCA & Legislative Update – Ben Crowell, MPCA
10:40 am	Member Update Report Questions/Discussion - All
10:55 am	Set Next Meeting – June 5, 2026
11:00 am	Adjourn
11:15 am	Optional: Tour of Dodge County's Reuse Center and Transfer Station

SEMREX Joint Powers Board Meeting
Friday June 6, 2025

Present: Sharon Schriever, SEMREX; Rita Cole, Dodge County; John Allen, Dodge County Commissioner; Marcus Thompson, Mower County; Mark Goskeson, Freeborn County; Nicole Ekstrom, Freeborn County Commissioner; Mike Ankeny, Mower County Commissioner; Paul Pieper, Rice County; Jim Purfeerst, Rice County Commissioner; Jeff Schneider, City of Red Wing; Greg Wright, Olmsted County Commissioner; Anthony Wittmer, Olmsted County; Katie Barden, Steele County; Tammie Bramer, Waseca County; Jim Kollar, Waseca County Public Works; Brian Harguth, Waseca County; Taylor Piotter, Blue Earth County; Mark Piepho, Blue Earth County Commissioner; Ben Crowell, MPCA

John Allen – chair called the meeting to order at 9:31am

Roll Call and introductions.

Motion to approve minutes.

Motion – Greg Wright, Olmsted

2nd – Nicole Eckstrom, Freeborn

Motion approved.

Director's update :

- **Market Update**

- Olmsted started shipping its mattresses in April to 2nd Chance Recycling. 2nd chance secured a grant to cover the cost of shipping.
- GBD plastics is up and running now. They recycle plastic bags, pallet wrap, stretch film, case overwrap, dry cleaning bags, newspaper sleeves, and more. They make post-consumer resin.

- **Prices**

- **OCC/Cardboard** prices have been relatively flat since December with a \$5 decrease in May
- **Sorted Office Paper** increased from \$160 in January to \$185 for the past 3 months.
- **Steel and aluminum** have been up and down. Charts were given to show this trend over the past 10 years. There are many variables that contribute to this. Revenue has been tracking close to 2024. Prices are slowly declining.

- **Budget**

- We are running close to 2024. This is on a cash basis. We currently have a cash balance around \$74,000 but new bills could clear tomorrow. We still have six months of contracted payments. We are hoping to break even but may end up in the hole.
- We can't continue to bleed red ink every year and stay in business. With my retirement, things will likely change on the Olmsted side and with the MRF coming online in late spring 2027.
- Sharon spoke to all the members – there is still interest in the Waste Wizard contract, networking, legislative platform and regional opportunities.

- There have been discussions of doing away with the cooperative marketing portion. Alternatively, we could ask the members to estimate how many tons they are going to ship to be able to estimate the annual budget better. It's a bit of a guessing game.
- With the membership fees as they are we can still do the waste wizard and the monthly tech meetings. Think about it before the December meeting and let Olmsted know of any desired changes. Each county said they could possibly do their own marketing.

Jeff Schneider – was thinking that Olmsted would be jumping in with both feet with the MRF coming online. Red Wing would possibly return to marketing via SEMREX with the MRF coming online. The MRF may provide a better opportunity for collaborative marketing.

Sharon - Anthony will continue to help with marketing. They will re-configure Sharon's position.

- Anthony believes that there is a benefit in the relationship that SEMREX provides along with the waste wizard and legislative discussion. He doesn't believe that collaborative marketing is as beneficial as it used to be. End markets have expressed frustration in the past with what they believe to be "price fishing." To balance our financial standing, SEMREX can dial back the professional services agreement. We could look at shared electronic folders across members to provide updates regarding pricing.

Jeff – when would the decision be made? This is something that we need to know. We can hash this out over the next couple tech meetings.

- **Regional Projects opportunities**

- The tech committee is still wanting to share communications – unifying the ordinances.
- Recycling education committee – for recycling info.
- Problem material consolidation – interest in staying together.
- Rita thinks it would be good to do something regional with problem materials such as mattresses. We need a place to bring them that is closer.
- Taylor – We need to make sure that things are going where they should be going to be recycled. We're not getting much transparency from some of the companies we work with (tires, mattresses etc). Companies need to know our expectations of what we want done with the products and by-products. We have a foot hold in legislation – we need to all be on board.
- "Does the state track where all the end markets are – and if they are doing the right thing?" Ben (MPCA) said alot of them do report that info but it is proprietary so it cannot be shared. Permit by Rule end markets are not as good at reporting. State contracts are the best bet right now because they are required to be audited. Allison Cameron – may be the best person in the MPCA to talk to.
- Jeff – it is important to have the JPB to leverage the legislature and marketing of materials. It would be good to continue to pursue a regional solid waste management plan. Regional planning would be helpful if bonding is needed.
- Ben – there are advantages with economies of scale – those counties that are in regional groups definitely have a leg up. He encouraged SEMREX members to retain this relationship.

- Greg Wright – the future of garbage and trash is that there will be regional plan rules from the state because of landfilling and hauling / liability costs. The better we are at planning that now – the better off we will be later.
- Jeff – It's not going to happen anytime soon but we need the infrastructure. We will still need some form of landfilling and will need to try to keep materials out of them.
- The Routeware/Waste Wizard contract is basically the same as last year (\$7,783.92).

Motion to approve the Waste Wizard agreement –

Motion – Jim Purrfest

2nd – Mike Ankeny - Mower

Motion approved.

Overview of Solid Waste Management Trip to Germany – Commissioner Ekstrom, Freeborn County

Last December, a delegation of 12 individuals—including representatives from the University of Minnesota, the MPCA, a landfill operator, a packaging specialist from Best Buy, a county commissioner, and a MRF representative—traveled to Germany for the first Sustainable Materials Group meeting. The eight-day trip was intensive, with no formal facility tours; instead, participants engaged directly with German experts, completed day trips, and visited grocery stores of various sizes to observe real-world applications of waste policies.

Highlights and Lessons Learned

- **Government Leadership & Regulation**

Germany's national government moves quickly in setting and enforcing waste and materials policies. Regulations flow directly to retailers, who must comply with requirements such as bottle recovery and standardized reuse systems. Enforcement is strong and consistent.

- **Reuse Culture & Deposit Systems**

Germany heavily incentivizes reuse with significant deposits on cups, plates, utensils, and other food-service items. Unlike the U.S., where single-use items commonly enter the waste stream, German consumers routinely return reusable items to recover deposits.

- **Advanced Resource Recovery**

- The **Remondis** site employs approximately 50,000 people and operates on the belief that nearly all materials can be repurposed.
- E-waste is systematically dismantled and reprocessed, with scientists employed to identify new reuse pathways.

- **Organics & Food Waste**

Germany has robust goals to divert food and organic waste, keeping these materials out of landfills and incinerators.

- **Renewable Energy Leadership**

Through solar, wind, and biomass-to-biogas technologies, some regions produce up to four times the energy they consume.

- **Education & Public Expectations**

School groups routinely tour facilities to learn about waste, recycling, and sustainability. Residents are expected to follow strict separation rules—down to removing twist ties and cleaning items.

“Trash police” conduct inspections, and households or businesses with contamination may receive warnings or have containers pulled.

- **Cultural Norms & Environmental Pride**

- No eating or drinking is allowed on public transit.
- Strong conservation ethic, including strict lights-out policies.
- National ambition to be carbon-neutral by 2030.
- Limited remaining landfill space; landfills are used primarily for construction and demolition debris.

- **Challenges Identified**

- Plastics remain difficult to manage, as a result of contamination between food waste and recyclables.
- Maintaining sanitation standards for reusable food-service items can be challenging.
- Differences in mindset between urban and rural residents mirror challenges seen in the U.S.

Reflections & Opportunities

Participants noted valuable insights from interacting with private-sector partners like Best Buy, particularly in electronics and packaging. There is strong interest in continuing to share what was learned in future meetings and professional settings.

Greg Wright (Olmsted County) expressed interest in potentially organizing a similar study trip in the future, possibly including Denmark and other countries with advanced solid waste systems. Interested individuals are encouraged to reach out.

MPCA - Legislative report – Ben Crowell

Budget Status

- The state does not yet have an approved budget. The goal is to have a budget finalized by July 1, as failure to do so could result in a state government shutdown.

Construction & Demolition (C&D) Draft Rules

- The latest C&D draft rules are still incomplete.
- The MPCA hopes to release them for public comment sometime this summer.
- Expected rule adoption is late next year.
- The upcoming *Solid Waste Matters* newsletter will include an overview of the draft rules.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

- *Solid Waste Matters* will feature an article by Mallory Anderson on EPR (specifically plastics and packaging).
- The state is working to secure a contractor to support the assessment process.
- Stakeholders, including local programs and facilities, are likely to be contacted for information.

Capital Assistance Program (CAP) Requests

- CAP has received its largest volume of requests to date.
- 20 applications totaling approximately \$130 million have been submitted.

Battery Legislation & Management

- In response to Brian's question, Scott Martin confirmed that no battery legislation passed this session, meaning no regulatory relief is coming.
- Most batteries can still be recycled through Call2Recycle.
- Car batteries are believed to fall under a manufacturer take-back statute.
- Legislation stalled largely due to the increasing complexity of embedded batteries in devices.

10:30 – John Allen had to leave – Brian Harguth took over the chair.

Member updates –

Blue Earth – has successfully collected e-waste for recycling at the Ponderosa Landfill through MPCA funding. They will be hosting another collection. The recycling rate for 2024 was close to 50%. Blue Earth made a lot of improvements at Ponderosa and other facilities to contain litter. There has been new construction at the landfill – needing to expand the cell. Everything else is running well.

Dodge – the Transfer station is getting a new building for MSW and recycling. The construction and demo material will go into building 1. Ther construction is coming along well and should be done by August 1. This will help with sorting the demo for items to be taken to the ReUse Center which is taking items for the first sale which will be on Friday June 13, 2025.

Freeborn – serviced 1969 participants in collecting hazardous waste. E-waste accounted for 19 tons. 245 people took 3,365 items from reuse. Many good items were put in the reuse room. 67% of waste is going to a landfill with 33% going to recycling. However, this does not include cardboard, DAV – 17 tons of textiles. Recycling costs average out to \$103.53/ton (blended rate).

Olmsted – is about 60% of the way through the value engineering planning process for Olmsted's materials recovery facility (MRF). Construction will begin in the spring of 2026 and will last until late-spring/early-summer 2027. Greg Wright – state funding helps. However, the inflationary rate went way up. The cost will be passed to the user of the garbage/recycling generators. Staff are planning how to navigate construction around an existing cell-phone tower.

Mower – is taking advantage of e-waste recycling funding. Participation has doubled, almost tripled, in the HHW facility with the e-waste included. A local yard waste composting facility is looking to get a PBR to accept apples from a local pie facility. The volume is about 20 yds a day. Mower hosted a rain barrel and compost bin sale for the first time and sold 72 units for \$50/each.

City of Red Wing – reported some sad news. Their secretary of 45 years passed away this spring. They received 29 applicants to refill the position. Their landfill abatement rate is 95%.

Rice County – replaced their old forklift with an electric Hyundai a couple months back. New construction on a landfill cell will be starting at the end of the month. They are filling in the saddle. Garbage and HHW is up. Recycling is down.

Steele – recently hosted an Enviro Show with local community education. Over 70 vendors participated in the event. The event attracted locals and different companies from all over. The event

also collected 2,000 lbs of paper for shredding, light bulbs, batteries, 500 lbs of produce, and clothing. Next year's show will be May 9, 2026. Over 600 people attended and donated over \$1,600 to the United Way.

Waseca – hosted a trial reuse event that kept 1,200 lbs out of the waste stream. Almost a ton of fabrics is getting picked up from the facility. Waseca also took advantage of the e-waste grant with Dynamic and will continue accepting e-waste items. They also submitted a CAP interest form.

Next Meeting Friday – December 5, 2025

Motion – Greg Wright – Olmsted

2nd – Nicole Ekstrom – Freeborn.

Motion carries.

Motion to adjourn

Motion – Greg Wright – Olmsted

2nd – Nicole Ekstrom – Freeborn

Motion carried.

Meeting Adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by

Rita Cole

Dodge County