



Southeast Minnesota Recyclers' Exchange Technical Committee Meeting

Date: **Friday, November 21, 2025**

Time: **10:00 a.m.**

Location: **Olmsted County Environmental Resources – 2122 Campus Drive SE, Rochester, MN 55904 – Conference Room A**

Chairperson: **Rita Cole**

Note Keeper: **Anthony Wittmer**

Time	Information Items	Presenter
10:00	1. Call to Order	Rita Cole
10:05	2. Approve Minutes	Rita Cole
10:10	3. Market Updates	Anthony Wittmer
10:25	4. Professional Services Contract, Mayo Solid Waste Conference, Website Update, SEMREX Prospectus	Anthony Wittmer
11:25	5. MPCA Update	Ben Crowell
11:35	6. Member Updates	All Staff
11:55	7. Next Technical Committee Meeting – January 2026	
12:00	8. Adjourn	

Notes:

If you cannot attend, please contact Anthony.

SEMREX Tech Committee Meeting

October 24, 2025

Waseca County Public Works Department

Present: Mark Goskeson (Freeborn), Taylor Piotter (Blue Earth), Paul Pieper (Rice), Marcus Thompson (Mower – Virtual), Jeff Schneider (City of Red Wing), Rita Cole (Dodge), Tammie Bramer (Waseca), Cathy Hall (Olmsted), Anthony Wittmer (SEMREX)

Call Meeting to Order: Chair Rita Cole called the meeting to order at 10:01 am.

Approval of Minutes: Paul motioned to approve the minutes. Mark seconded, motion carried.

Market Updates: Recyclable commodities remain mediocre across the board as demand for recyclable materials is modest. AMG (steel buyer) anticipates a jump in market prices between \$20 - \$40/ton by the end of January 2026. Tariffs continue to add uncertainty to the market. Demand for OCC is relatively flat. LDI didn't see the typical boost in demand (Aug/Sept.) in preparation for the holidays. Plastic prices are low but Republic sees stabilization in PET and HDPE as they move into months of lower consumption. A lot of mills are moving in and out of the markets so mills are not paying what is listed on the index.

Survey Discussion: Members discussed recent experiences selling appliances to River City Metals. Jeff reported challenges with a load of aluminum UBC sold to Cardinal, noting the price was reduced after pickup.

Anthony shared that several counties—including Pope-Douglas—have expressed interest in joining SEMREX. This led to discussion on potential future directions for SEMREX. Members agreed it would be most practical to begin outreach with counties in Southeast Minnesota (Goodhue, Houston, Winona, Fillmore, etc.). Cathy and Anthony will draft a prospectus to present at the November Technical Committee meeting.

MPCA and Legislative Updates: Ben

- **Grant Opportunities:** Approximately **\$33 million** is available for climate-smart food systems (from production through end-of-life). Funding is sourced from a federal grant.
- **SCORE:** The MPCA plans to incorporate conversion factors into RETRAC. Ben has created a spreadsheet to convert cubic yards to tons; RETRAC will include a link.
- **EPR Advisory Board:** Working with a contractor to prepare a report. They are seeking additional information on paper and packaging collection and infrastructure and will be contacting select counties.
- **Waste Characterization Study:** Currently underway at landfills. Results are expected by the end of next year.
- **SCORE Payments:** All SCORE payments will increase by **3% for FY2025**. The 2024 SCORE report is on track to be updated by the end of next year.

Member Updates:

Waseca:

- HHW season has concluded.
- Operating with one full-time staff vacancy.
- Awaiting final budget approval for Paradigm at the scale house (approx. \$4,000 annually).
- Compost has been screened; two large piles are ready for sale.

Olmsted:

- Hiring a Solid Waste Outreach & Education Technician.
- Conducting a software and data-management analysis.
- Working with a marketing firm to assist with a complete rebranding of educational materials.

Dodge:

- GreenCorps member Grant will serve through September 2026. He will be assisting at Reuse Center.
- Staff are also working with contractors to stop at the Reuse Center before the transfer station.
- Staff attended the Reuse Conference; highlights included presentations by Cool Trash.net, Better Futures, and the Southwest Lending Library in Chaska—popular items include bouncy houses, camping gear, kitchen appliances, food dehydrators, and kayaks.
- The reuse building is currently very full. Restore picks up on Wednesdays, and unsold materials go to Furnishing Hope.
- Fridays are strong sales days; Saturdays are slower.

Rice:

- Reviewing draft fee changes to take effect in 2026—first adjustments in over 10 years. Rates will align more closely with metro pricing.
- Brush (public and commercial) will now incur disposal fees; previously free.
- Landfill rates:
 - Public: \$68/ton (plus tax) → \$78/ton (plus tax)
 - Haulers: \$54/ton → \$61/ton
- Purchased a new John Deere 950 P dozer for approximately \$860,000.
- Landfill hired a new landfill supervisor (formerly an operator); hiring an additional operator soon.
- New landfill cell has been completed.
- Mixed recycling is down 16–17%, likely due to decreased out-of-county material.
- LDI reported Rice County has recycled over 20,500 tons of OCC since 2010.
- HHW participation was up 7% in October.

Blue Earth:

- Working on hauler and facility licensing.

- Completing construction on a new landfill cell.
- HHW participation is strong; HHW is now open **year-round** with reduced winter hours (noon–4 p.m.).
- Recycling tonnage has declined; landfill tonnage remains steady or slightly higher.
- Ponderosa picked up an HHW storage container.

Red Wing:

- Recently held an e-waste collection that served **767 vehicles in six hours**, generating 2–3 semi loads of material.
- Seeking an additional 40 tons/day of garbage to meet their 30,000 tons/year contract with Xcel.
- Staff are developing a plan for annual tipping fee adjustments: \$5/ton increases over four years instead of a single increase.

Freeborn:

- Working to launch a sharps disposal program.
- Collaboration with Mower County on e-waste collection continues to go well.
- Nearly ready to ship a full semi-load of hazardous waste for the year.
- Started a reuse area but are facing challenges with customers taking parts of items and leaving the rest behind.

Mower:

- Marcus attended the paper/plastic conference in Chicago and conducted extensive networking with industry staff from across the U.S. and more than twenty countries.
- Applied for a solar public buildings grant.
- Working with RRT on a solid waste feasibility study to assess future infrastructure needs.

Next Meeting: Friday, November 21, 2025, in Olmsted

Motion to Adjourn: Jeff motioned to adjourn and Marcus seconded it at 12:02 pm.