City of Medford Waste Collection Public Meeting

November 18, 2026

Mayor Breanna Lungo-Koehn
Department of Public Works
Office of Planning, Development, and Sustainability

Thank you for being here

Housekeeping

Info & Listening

Tonight is for us to present the findings of our research based on survey results and community feedback, highlight our recommendation, and listen to your current feedback.

Recording

A recording of this meeting will be available for playback on the City of Medford's website, YouTube Channel, and on Medford Community Media's website.

Run out of time?

If you are unable to stay until your turn to speak, or if you have more you want to say to the City, please email the City at: **waste@medford-ma.gov**

We want to hear from you to understand your unique perspective. If you are repeating something already stated, please just say you agree with the previous comment.

Tonight's Speakers

Breanna Lungo-Koehn, Mayor

Alicia Hunt, Director of Planning, Development, and Sustainability

Tim McGivern, DPW Commissioner

Tyler Frank, President, Garbage to Garden

Questions? Email: waste@medford-ma.gov

Agenda

- → Mayor’s Remarks
- → Staff Presentation
- → Public Comment – open until 9:30 p.m.
- → Next Steps & Closing

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Trash Collection Concerns

Overarching

Weekly Collection

is the top priority

Related Issues

1. Rodents
2. Health and Sanitation
3. Fairness, Equity, Access
4. Diapers, Pet, and Medical Waste
5. Illegal Dumping

This is what we heard from residents.

WE HEARD YOU:

Keep weekly trash collection.
Keep the same size trash cart.
Reduce waste and pollution.
Control costs.

Goals Medford's Smarter Waste System should meet

Create Fairness and Transparency
for waste system users

Expand Recycling and Composting
services to eligible recipients

Control Costs
for solid waste and recycling collection services

Provide Comparable Services
to neighboring communities

Streamline Transition for New Programs
ensuring continuity of service without interruptions

Move Medford Toward Zero Waste
per the Climate Action & Adaptation Plan

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The option that rose to the top for us

Weekly collection in trash carts using official City trash bags

This approach addresses residents' trash collection concerns, provides flexibility, and meets program goals.

52 free bags to start

Every household gets 52 free bags, about 2 a week, before the program launch.

52 more for recycling

Recycle during first six months to earn more free trash bags.

After year one

The City is evaluating further options.

There is no implementation date. **No new trash collection program will start without plenty of advance notice, outreach, a help line, and FAQs.**

Why we eventually need to change our trash system?

This is a proactive approach that will help us adapt to these changes.

Landfills are closing

MassDEP projects in-state landfill space will fall close to zero by the early 2030s. Net exports of trash have more than doubled since 2018, to 2.8 million tons in 2024.

A shortfall is coming

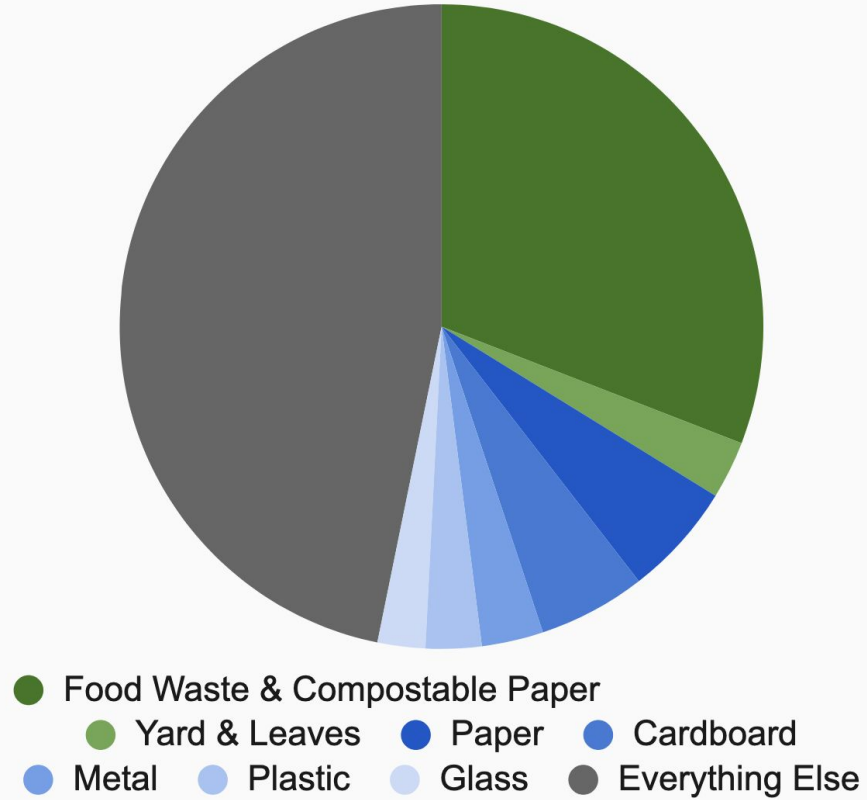
Even if the state meets its waste reduction goals, MassDEP projects a gap of about 700,000 tons of disposal capacity in 2030. Medford's disposal costs may increase dramatically.

Food waste rules are expanding

Large businesses already cannot send food waste to disposal. MassDEP is discussing their plan to extend the ban to all businesses and then to households, as soon as 2028 and 2030.

What's in Medford's Trash?

53% of trash can be recycled & composted through existing programs



Source: Saugus incinerator 2022 waste composition study data

Climate & Environment

This approach reduces trash and increases diversion.

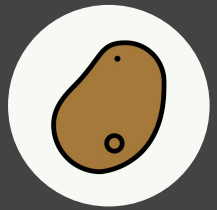
Improve air quality.

Burn less trash.



24,000 tons

less trash in five years:
145 blue whales



10 lb/hh/week

less trash per household per week:
a 10-lb bag of potatoes each week for five years

Planning estimate, FY28 to FY32, with proposed trash collection program.

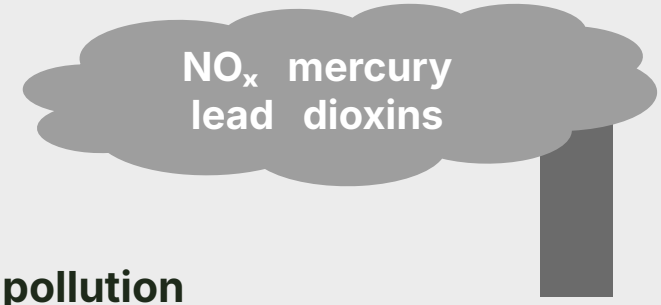
Conserve resources.

Reduce groundwater pollution.

Icons: flaticon.com; OpenMoji (CC BY-SA 4.0). Whale weight: NOAA.

Emissions & Toxic Ash

Out of the smokestack



Air pollution

Burning trash releases nitrogen oxides, mercury, lead and dioxins, linked to asthma, other breathing problems and cancer.

In the ash

arsenic
cadmium
lead

Concentrated toxins

About 20% of what is burned is left as ash. It concentrates arsenic, cadmium and lead, and has to be buried.

Sources: MASSPIRG, Garbage in Massachusetts Pollutes, Dec. 2020, and Boston Globe, Jan. 2021 (stack emissions); MassDEP, 2024 Solid Waste Data Update, Jan. 2026 (ash share); Grist, Jan. 2018 (metals in ash).


WIN Saugus incinerator
Walmart
Broadway
Lincoln Ave
N Shore Rd
Our trash is burned near Revere Beach. The ash is buried in the Rumney Marsh.
Saugus Ash Landfill
Salem St
Lynn St
Sea Plane Basin Trail
Cemetery
Market Basket
Sea Plane Basin
Revere Beach
Revere Beach
Malden St
Gore Rd
Squire Rd

Less trash means less burned in Saugus

- Medford's trash is burned at the WIN Waste incinerator in Saugus, the oldest operating trash incinerator in the U.S.
- Burning trash releases nitrogen oxides, mercury, lead and dioxins, linked to asthma, other breathing problems and cancer.
- Rather than meet stricter 2019 state limits on nitrogen oxides, the plant was allowed to buy “offset” credits.
- A 2020 review in Massachusetts of 93 studies linked living near incinerators, especially older ones, to some cancers and to birth defects and preterm birth. The authors found the evidence too uncertain to call any incinerator safe.

Sources: Boston Globe, Jan. 2021; WBUR, Jan. 2022; MASSPIRG, Garbage in Massachusetts Pollutes, Dec. 2020; Tait et al., The health impacts of waste incineration: a systematic review, Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 2020.

Saugus ash is running out of places to go

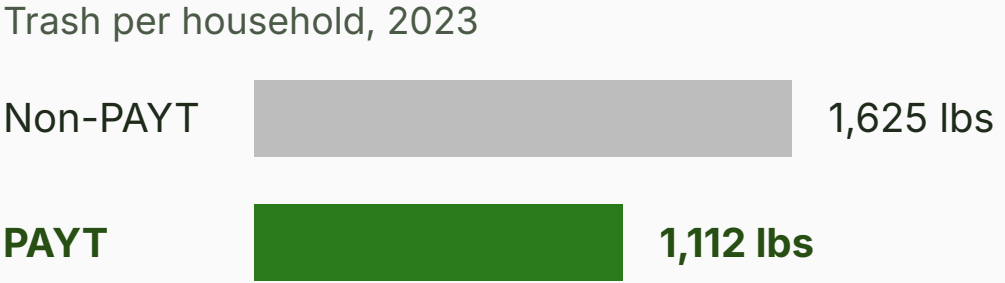
- The incinerator ash goes to the state's only active unlined landfill, in the Rumney Marsh, a protected wetlands. MassDEP projects it will close in 2027.
- About half the ash is already trucked to a WIN Waste landfill in Shrewsbury, a roughly 100-mile round trip.
- MassDEP projects the Shrewsbury landfill will close in 2031.
- No plan for the ash after that has been announced.

Round-trip distance is an estimate by road. Sources: MASSPIRG, Garbage in Massachusetts Pollutes, Dec. 2020; MassDEP, 2024 Solid Waste Data Update, Jan. 2026; Saugus Advocate, Nov. 14, 2024.

PAYT households throw away 32% less trash

32%

less trash per household in Massachusetts PAYT communities



Communities cut trash 25% to 50% after starting PAYT. 162 of 351 Massachusetts communities use it.

Source: MassDEP, PAYT in Massachusetts: Fast Facts, February 2025 (calendar year 2023 data).

Lowest-cost way to keep weekly trash

Four trash collection options, estimated FY28 cost to the City

Option	FY28 cost	Trash Reduction	Weekly trash
No change (current system)	$4.9M	5%	Yes
Every-other-week trash	$3.5M	30%	No
Weekly, official bags in current carts	$4.2M	25%	Yes
Weekly, new 35-gallon carts	$5.5M	35%	Yes

Cost includes collection, disposal and PAYT system costs. Trash cut is estimated disposal reduction vs. FY26. Source: Strategy Zero Waste Solutions

There is no implementation date.

Weekly service first, then lowest cost

1. Keep trash collection weekly

Residents' top priority. Every-other-week trash is off the table.

Weekly options, FY28 cost

No change: $4.9M

New 35-gallon carts: $5.5M

Official bags in current carts: $4.2M

2. Choose the lowest cost

Official bags cost the least of the weekly options, reduces trash about 25%, and qualify for a $200K state grant.

FY28 estimates of collection, disposal, and PAYT system costs. Source: Strategy Zero Waste Solutions

There is no implementation date.

City Cost Savings

This approach is projected to cut costs.

$8M
projected **disposal costs** over five years if we do nothing

vs.

$3.4M
projected **cost savings** over five years from bag revenue and avoided trash disposal costs

Planning estimates, FY28 to FY32, no change vs. with proposed trash collection approach.

There is no implementation date.

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Higher Cost Programs

Idea	Added cost	Why we ruled it out
Weekly recycling	+$1.85M/yr	Recycling rises only 1% to 2%
New 35-gallon trash carts	+$600K/yr	Carts and trucks cost more than they save
Compostable liners for all homes	+$516K/yr	Cost is too high

Added cost vs. current system, FY28 estimates, Source: Strategy Zero Waste Solutions; Recycling: The Recycling Partnership, 2016; MassDEP municipal data, 2025

Lower Cost Programs

Ideas residents raised:

Recycling and reuse

- More recycling, reuse and hard-to-recycle drop-off options
- Free extra recycling and compost carts

Cleaner neighborhoods

- Address illegal dumping
- Free replacement of rodent-damaged carts
- Pet waste storage containers

Easier composting

- Free paper kitchen compost bags
- Kitchen compost containers

52 free bags to start, earn more free bags by recycling

Months 1–6
Every household gets 52 free trash bags, about 2 a week.

Months 7–12
Recycle during first six months to earn more free trash bags.

After year one
The City is evaluating further options.

Get your bags
A voucher for 52 bags arrives by email, or by mail if you do not sign up for paperless. No smartphone is required.

Redeem at the store
Scan the voucher at a participating store, like a manufacturer coupon. Each code works once and expires 6 months after it is issued.

There is no implementation date.

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Each household controls its own cost

Households that recycle every collection get 2 free bags a week.

Household	Free bags	Extra bags
Recycles most collection days, uses 2 bags a week or fewer	Covered	None needed
Recycles most collection days, uses more	First 2 per week free	$1.75 each
Does not take part	None	$1.75 each
Cannot take part (approved exception)	Free	$1.75 each

Recycling earns free bags. Any household can lower its cost by taking part.

Months 7–12 shown. Small bag prices; large bag $3.50.

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Official Bags in Carts Reward Program

This approach addresses residents' top concerns.

Resident Concern Expressed	Concern Addressed?
Weekly Collection	✅
Rodents	✅
Health and Sanitation	✅
Fairness, Equity, Access	✅
Diapers/Pet/Medical Waste	✅
Increased Illegal Dumping	✅

Education and help first, penalties last

A person, not just a notice

A team visits homes to answer questions and get households started.

Support where needed

Seniors and people with disabilities can have bags delivered. Coupons come by email or mail, and a help line is available.

Exceptions

If a household cannot take part, the team looks for a solution or recommends an exception. DPW reviews it.

What counts as a violation?

Only using a non-official bag. Skipping recycling just means no free bags that week.

Problems are met first with a notice and help, then visits, and only after that a fine.

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TELL US

What would help your household?

Comment tonight

The remainder of this meeting will be dedicated to public comment on Medford's Smarter Waste System.

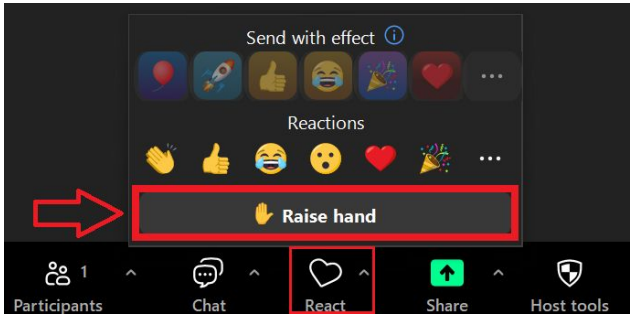
Email us your thoughts

waste@medford-ma.gov

Listening Session

General Chat is disabled

Direct message “Troubleshooting Staff” in the Chat if you need technical help!



Public Comment

Use ✋ **Raise hand** function in the React menu to be placed in the queue.

2 minutes per speaker

The meeting host will ask you to unmute when it is your turn to speak. An on-screen countdown timer will show you how much time you have left to speak.



Reactions

Reactions have been disabled for this meeting. Please raise your hand to provide comment.

No surprises: you will hear well in advance

Nothing will change without plenty of notice, information and help

Advance notice

No start date has been set. Residents will hear well before anything changes.

Staff is here to help

Contact City Hall with questions about bags, pickup and exceptions.

FAQs online

Questions and answers will be posted on our website.

Next Steps

1. Compile public feedback
2. Request feedback from City Council
3. Update to follow in the New Year

Email: waste@medford-ma.gov
Webpage: medfordma.org/waste-system
Enroll in weekly composting: medfordcomposts.com

Thank you for your time & participation.

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