

## Commissioner's Corner



Commissioner **John Doherty**, and **Sergej Mahnovski**, Director of the Mayor's Office of Long Term Planning and Sustainability, to announce two new partnerships that will reduce the amount of organic waste that is sent to landfills, produce a reliable source of clean energy, and improve air quality.

Waste Management, one of the city's largest trash hauling firms, recently began delivering pre-processed organic food waste from local schools to the Newtown Creek plant where it is added to wastewater sludge to increase the production of biogas. In a first-of-its kind project with natural gas supplier National Grid, that biogas will be converted into pipeline quality renewable natural gas for residential and commercial use. Together, these projects have the potential to produce enough energy to heat nearly 5,200 New York City homes, reduce annual



greenhouse gas emissions by more than 90,000 metric tons—the equivalent of removing nearly 19,000 cars from the road—and help City government reach its *PlaNYC* goal of reducing municipal greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent by 2017.

Biogas is a by-product of the wastewater treatment process and DEP already reuses about 40 percent of the gas produced at Newtown Creek to heat the plant. The new partnership with National Grid will ensure that the remaining 60 percent will be beneficially reused and not contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. All of this is being done at no cost to DEP's ratepayers. National Grid will finance the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of the biogas purification system. Once project costs have been recouped, profits from the sale of the gas will be split between DEP and National Grid's customers. Construction of the purification system will begin in 2014 and is expected to be completed the following year.

Waste Management is currently processing 2 tons of organic waste each day and plans to increase the volume to 5 to 10 tons per day during the initial pilot phase, with the potential to raise capacity to 250 tons per day over the next three years. If the pilot proves successful, there is the potential to process up to 500 tons of organic food waste per day at the Newtown Creek Plant.

Over the past several years, the City has pursued a portfolio of initiatives to increase in-city renewable energy, improve air quality, and divert solid waste from landfills. The City is more than halfway towards achieving its goal of a 30 percent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions citywide by 2030, and from City government operations by 2017. These new partnerships with Waste Management and National Grid build upon other *PlaNYC* initiatives that have helped New York City's air quality reach the cleanest levels in more than 50 years. Since 2008, the levels of sulfur dioxide in the air have dropped by 69 percent and since 2007 the level of soot pollution has dropped by 23 percent. The cleaner air enjoyed by New Yorkers today is preventing 800 deaths and 2,000 emergency room visits and hospitalizations from lung and cardiovascular diseases annually, compared to 2008.

I'd like to recognize the DEP staff that put a tremendous amount of work into this project including: **Anthony Fiore** and **Tami Lin** with our energy team, **Sarah Hurley** and **Robert Craig** with our legal team, and **Lou Carrio** from our wastewater treatment team who helped with the conceptual development. Also, a special thanks to Deputy Commissioner **Vincent Sapienza**, Newtown Creek Plant Superintendent **Jim Pynn**, **Eric Klee** and **Jim Sullivan**.

For many DEP employees, this week and next are short work weeks for breaks to celebrate Christmas, New Year's Day, or both with families and friends. I hope that all of you have a happy holiday season and a healthy and productive 2014.

Although there are only a few days left in the year, we continue to work hard for a strong finish to 2013. Along those lines, last Thursday, I joined Deputy Mayor **Cas Holloway**, Sanitation

## Spotlight on Safety

### The Colors of Safety

Most of us are familiar with the colors associated with traffic signs and as we go throughout the day we can come across a plethora of signs with an array of colors. Similarly, as you walk through the various DEP worksites, you will come into contact with signs, various equipment, and materials with specific color schemes. Many of these are color coded to help us recognize and understand the message being conveyed. OSHA and the American National Standards Institute

have standardized certain colors so that hazards can be readily identified to keep you safe. For instance, according to OSHA:

- Red means **DANGER**
- Yellow means **CAUTION**
- Orange means **WARNING**
- Fluorescent orange or orange-red means **BIOLOGICAL HAZARD**

To learn more please see DEP's [Hazard Markings and Color Coding Policy](#).

At DEP, everyone is responsible for safety. If you or anyone on your team is concerned about your working conditions, it's okay to ask your supervisor or your bureau's EHS liaison how they can help. If you've still got questions, you can call the EHS Employee Concerns Hotline. It's DEP's responsibility to acknowledge and fix unsafe situations, procedures, and practices. With your help, we'll not only get the job done, we'll make it safer for ourselves, our coworkers, our families, and our city.

CALL (800) 897-9677 OR SEND A MESSAGE THROUGH PIPELINE. HELP IS ON THE WAY. 

## Focus on the Field



Growing up in nearby Mount Laurel, New Jersey, Urban Fellow **Isabella Wechsler** always wanted the chance to live and work in New York City. After graduating from Lenape High School she earned a degree from Harvard University in Environmental Science and Public Policy. As part of her studies, she spent a summer in Shanghai, China, where she worked for the Joint U.S.-China Collaboration on Clean Energy policies that connected local officials to environmental initiatives that were introduced in U.S. cities. This included **Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC**, which the nonprofit translated into Mandarin. According to Wechsler, there was tremendous interest in New York City's policies because they were viewed as a way to successfully protect the environment while also preserving and encouraging economic growth.

After graduation, Wechsler was selected to join the Urban Fellows Program, which in New York City is run by the Department of City-Wide Administrative Services. The program is highly selective and exposes young graduates from across the country to the important work taking place in mayoral offices and City agencies. The program seeks to ensure that every Urban Fellow comprehends the intricacies of city, state and

federal policy and, over the last few years, several Urban Fellows have joined DEP full time at the completion of the fellowship.

After interviewing with numerous city agencies, Wechsler was thrilled with the opportunity to work at DEP. Since beginning her fellowship, she joined the executive office and has focused on working with the bureaus to develop the next iteration of the Department's four-year strategic plan. This has included 42 engagement sessions with more than half of the agency's workforce where Commissioner Strickland has heard employees' ideas and advice as to what the department's broad goals and specific actionable initiatives should be as we move into the future.

"DEP's front line workers know best which policies work well, and what areas may need to be addressed, so the engagement sessions are an essential part of the process to develop the strategic plan," said Wechsler.

"Isabella is a hard worker and her expertise in environmental science and public policy has been a terrific help to us," said Chief of Staff **Chris Hawkins**.

The Urban Fellows also volunteer at the Eagle Academy in the Bronx where they tutor students and help them prepare college and scholarship applications. Outside of the office, Wechsler stays active by running and swimming whenever she can. She also enjoys cooking and reading about urban design in her spare time.

"I feel extremely lucky to have been given the opportunity to work at DEP," said Wechsler. "I have already learned an incredible amount in such a short span of time from our diverse workforce of engineers, planners, and field operators."

## Press Box

**NY1 - CITY HAS NEW PLAN TO TURN SEWAGE INTO ENERGY:** The City is teaming up with National Grid to turn sewage gas into natural gas that can be sold to homeowners. The gas is recovered at the Newtown Creek sewage treatment plant. The gas is pulled from the landmark digester eggs that you can see from the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway and other nearby roads. The recovered gas from the plant should be able to heat more than 5,000 homes, and is equivalent to getting 19,000 cars off the road. - See more [here](#)

**We welcome your feedback! To submit an announcement or suggestion, please email us at: [newsletter@dep.nyc.gov](mailto:newsletter@dep.nyc.gov)**

## Welcome Aboard



Yesterday, 14 new employees attended orientation and received an overview of the department from Chief Financial Officer **Steve Lawitts** and Deputy Commissioner for Organizational Development **Diana Jones Ritter**. We hope everyone will join us in welcoming them to DEP!

**Robert C. Barberio, Alexander Beckles, Jimmy Bencivengo Jr., Luis Gualpa, Joey Rodriguez, Maximo Rodriguez, Ferdinando Ruffino, Matthew Stack, Jermaine Stewart, and Tarik Washington** with BWSO; **Thomas Bassmann** with FMC; **Benjamin Huff** with BEPA; **Alexander Kiselyuk** with OIT; and **Anna Zieba** with ACCO.

## Kudos Corner



**Hannah Tobias**, a sophomore at Vassar College, and daughter of BWS Deputy Land Acquisition Chief **Dave Tobias**, was awarded a scholarship by the Hundred Year Association of New York last week. Founded in 1927, the Hundred Year Association of New York records the founding of New York City businesses, professional, educational,

religious, and charitable organizations that are at least one hundred years old. In recognition of the close partnership between the New York City private sector and City government, the Association established its program to recognize outstanding New York City career civil service employees in 1958. The scholarships recognize excellence in scholastic achievement and community service. Pictured from left to right: Hundred Year Association President, **Clinton Blume**, Deputy Commissioner **Diana Jones-Ritter**, David Tobias, CAE Committee Chairman, Executive Director, Brooklyn Bar Association, **Avery Okin**.

## Holiday Benefit Show



Last Thursday, the State Employees Federated Appeal hosted a Holiday Show to benefit the Make-a-Wish Foundation. Several DEP employees performed in the show that took place in the cafeteria at Lefrak. Pictured: **Thomas Sanfedele** (NYSED); **William Maggiulli** (DEP); **Delton Mace** (NYSED); **Maria Montes** (NYSED); **William Angelini** (DEP); **Sheila O'Connor** (S.E.F.A. NYC Manager); **Deana Rodriguez** (DEP); **Taylor Evans** (DEP-consultant); **Mike Caban** (DEP-retired); **Michael Senatore** (DEP-consultant); **John Lento** (DEP)