



New Paltz is Part of Local Food Recovery Hub

By Laura Petit

New Paltz Recycling Coordinator

The New Paltz Food Recovery Program has naturally transitioned to match several components of the EPA hierarchy for food recovery. In 2011, during early stages of the New Paltz program, public interactive workshops were held as part of a zero waste initiative partnership with EPA. There attendees made it clear that composting was one of the most important initiatives.

By 2012, the New Paltz ReUse and Recycling Center had received approval from the state regulatory agency, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, to begin taking in commercial food waste for composting which, to date, has diverted over 1,380 tons of source separated food waste. New Paltz established itself as a model for other small capacity composting sites registered for up to 1,000 cubic yards per year. Ulster County now has five (5) registered composting sites which are operated by both public and private sector companies.

The food recovery program then began a grass roots transition to include

food recovered for animal feed between the upstream generator and downstream user. Several local food chains (retail and warehouses) including a grocery retailer which donates food for both human consumption that is collected weekly for a soup kitchen and animal feed. Another is a snack food franchise that donates to a local pig and chicken farmer.

Over the past year, Laura Petit, Recycling Coordinator for the Town of New Paltz and members of local charities, volunteers and regulatory agencies have had discussions on implementing a food recovery program for human consumption with a Master Organics Management Program that will incorporate all components of the EPA Food Recovery hierarchy. Until recently, annual events such as the SUNY New Paltz campus dorm cleanout generate just under a ton of non-perishable food which is transported by volunteers to several local charities were the only food recovery for human consumption programs, however, New Paltz has now partnered with multiple key players in the Hudson Valley Food Hub.

In August, 2016 the Town Board

voted unanimously, following a presentation by Michael Berg, Food Insecurity Collaborative and Laura Petit, Town of New Paltz Recycling Coordinator, to negotiate an agreement for a freezer/ cooler to be located at the New Paltz Re-Use and Recycling Center.

The cooler will be part of a food recovery hub that connects other distribution warehouse and will be shared with four (4) to seven (7) local pantries for the purpose of benefitting the local community(ies). The cooler will provide additional storage so pantries can manage distribution of perishable produce, reduce transportation and CO2 emissions and encourage additional donations from farms that overproduce or are gleaning. Spoiled food and produce will be evaluated for use as animal food as per the New Paltz Zero Waste Action Plan or will be composted on site at the Town's registered food waste composting site. The second phase of this collaboration will be to store food prepared at restaurants and/or by caterers until it can be transported to soup kitchens.