

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes
March 8, 2023, 8:00am – 9:30am
Virtual Meeting Minute Taker: Diane Roseman

Members Present: Dailey Brannin, David Demme, Lee Elliot, Debby Galef, Tracie Gordon, Martha Henry, Sakiko Isomichi, Debby Knight, Elka Kuhlman, Emily Lee, Scott MacGrath, Audrey Ng, Richard Nurse, Carlie Peters, Dawn Quirk, Diane Roseman, Meera Singh, Helen Snively, Quinten Steenhuis Alexandra Toupal, Julia Tsang, Rob Vandenabeele, Siddharth Vedullapalli, Stephanie Wasiuk,

Members Absent: Laura Nichols

Staff Present: Mike Orr

Public Present: Amy Waltz

Minutes from February were approved.

Updates on the recycling/waste program from Mike

	2020	2021	2022	Percent change
Trash (tons)	14,923	13,881	13,069	-12.4%
Recycling (tons)	8,763	8,965	8,431	-3.8%
Yard waste (tons)	2,014	1,978	1,566	-22.2%
Compost (tons)	381	969	1,884	394.5%
Mattress (tons)	154	140	131	-14.9%
Metal (tons)	93	143	148	59.1%
E-waste (tons)	64	90	87	35.9%
Textiles (tons)	68	47	162	138.2%

Why has yard waste gone down so much?

Mike says it's hard to know, it could be just an anomaly. People are putting out yard waste in times when it's not picked up. Sometimes they collect it anyway, as they don't like to say no to residents. Perhaps it's worth changing the dates due to climate change? Maybe we need to extend the season? It was extended two weeks not long ago and we already have the longest yard waste season. We can't just respond to fluctuations in the weather, as there are contracts. You can leave yard waste in paper bags in your yard and it will last until April.

Compost and textile collections way up.

Get rid of it right data: Top searched items in Recollect during 2022

Views	Title
20363	Clothes/Textiles (any condition)
10718	Couch
10421	Plastic bag
6691	Air conditioner
5879	Battery (non-alkaline)
5845	Nuts, bolts, screws, nails, hinges
5185	Mattress & Box Spring
5026	Styrofoam blocks and containers
5020	Battery (alkaline)
4845	Holiday tree (natural)

What happened to the oops stickers? Could we have stickers that point out what they can bring to the recycling center? Seems like a good idea.

MIT is releasing its contract for preferred vendors for catering - Dawn was able to add the recycling center info to the contract information.

Do we have posters about the recycling center? We have the waste handbook guide which points out the recycling options, compost, etc. We like to send people to the website, and the recycling center pops up there. We have to figure out what to focus on—right now the focus is on compost, to get people to compost - biggest bang for the buck.

Are we able to do analytics on what part of Cambridge the questions come from? Yes, the tool is very techy. Mike will consider breaking down the data. If any RAC members want to do a deep dive in the data, let him know. If we could figure out who's looking up what it would help target outreach/education.

MIT has an interest for the city/residents to be involved in some MIT programs. Maybe there's a place for some collaboration with MIT for an electronics recycling drive, etc.? Definitely during move out season.

Question about upgrading the recycling center. Mike: It's a bigger question. We have nowhere to put the large machinery that's over near Alewife, and it might involve moving the whole thing. Above his pay grade but Mike's looking at this as things change over time.

There's a community swap at the Cambridge Community Center on March 18, organized in part by Helen. Maybe an opportunity to proselytize? Perhaps a stack of mailers could be given out, with info for outreach. What other events could we be advertising at? Central Square farmers market?

Do we know how many people use the recycling center weekly? Mike: It's a steady stream, contingent on the weather, but we really don't know the numbers.

Debrief of Core facility tour–

One takeaway was that compostable liners are not necessary at this site. But it's a bigger discussion. A compostable item will deteriorate faster in a landfill, not really sure it matters if it goes to an incinerator. Plastic might be better as it uses less material to create.

OUTREACH!

Main goal of the spring is to push food waste collection. We want to give out 5000 kitchen bins in 2023. We've given out 1000 so far. Outreach events are coming up.

About the RAC (see slideshow at the end of the document)

More slides and info about the RAC. Cambridge is a leader in MA, maybe even nationally. Mike says it's due to the RAC and passionate people. Slides are attached to the minutes with the accomplishments of the last few years.

Suggestions from the members for RAC's focus this year – a brainstorm!

Meera has been doing compost outreach at Lincoln Way. One neighborhood at a time. Always better to do outreach in pairs. Debby G. will help. If anyone else wants to join her let her know.

There are five buy nothing Cambridge groups – maybe we could have RAC members in each group and they could post? Always more effective coming from neighbors vs “the government”. Tik Tok? Video or on Instagram. Also flyers with common items that people want to get rid of and point to Get Rid of it Right. Reusable bag collection/swap where people can put bags they aren't using, get a bag.

Pemberton Farms allows you to bring your own containers. Also Neighborhood Produce in Somerville, Cambridge Naturals, some Whole Foods, and Cleenland, which has refillable soaps, etc. Biggest waste stream is takeout containers from restaurants. Newton has a fantastic Green group on Instagram. Could use as inspiration. Data gathering is important, we could make it more robust, and would help us focus our programs. Would be great to focus on reusable mugs/reusable containers that businesses allow, and incentives they may offer.

Emily would be happy to compile a list of businesses that promote reuse.

NPR radio story by Martha Bebinger about a successful repair cafe in Framingham:
<https://www.npr.org/2023/03/05/1161192468/repair-cafes-are-back-after-the-pandemic-and-theyre-only-getting-more-popular>.

Where does the compost come from that we give out? From yard waste program.

Dailey: Next fix it clinic at the new science and engineering building in Allston in April. She'd love to offer consistent clinics. She feels they would be better attended on a regular schedule.

It would be great to have a shared calendar with events.

Richard very involved with Rotary club and getting info out to the high schools. Must focus on the children, as they can be very influential over their families.

Audrey: BPS is finding out which high schools have community service requirements. Maybe we could do same in Cambridge.

Tracie: Seniors and kids would be the best focus. She'll send info about Buy Nothing groups. They allow requests for items. Teacher who wants art supplies, community group wants folding chairs, etc. There's an active spreadsheet.

New name for RAC? If you have ideas, submit them to Mike (see action items)

Closing:

April 3, 8-9:30, meet with city officials at DPW offices. Meet each other in person, coffee and maybe words from the officials.

April 20th, Covanta incinerator tour.

Storytelling webinar April 11th, featuring Meera talking about Mumbai waste, also Adam Minter.

April 22: main library compost giveaway and fix-ip clinic

Elections for chairs/secretary of the RAC in April. Interested parties should let Mike know.

Public Comments:

Amy thinks it's important to update the RAC goals – the public needs to know that trash could be reduced to 33% very easily. And that you can reduce even more. There has to be more urgency in our goals, and to do it quickly. Hoping there could be a strong environmental message for Earth Day.

Action items:

Mike will dig into data analytics, look into shared calendar.

Figure out ways to analyze the data we have for searching the Get Rid of it Right Tool.

Volunteer for outreach events—Mike will send out a list and people can sign up.

Questions about how to contact each other. Fine to email everyone, but if it is related to a decision the RAC must make in a more substantial topic (i.e. Voting to send letter to City Council) it could be a violation of the Open Meeting Law. Also, if it gets too much with emails, we'll figure out a different system. Otherwise, members can email the group if it is about how to directly increase diversion in Cambridge.

RAC members to propose RAC name changes here: <https://forms.gle/TJpmhoJ2iy5bfUZ49>

Chat

08:10:41 From Amy Waltz to Everyone:

2022 had 2 weeks of beautiful weather in March. most of my area was cleaned up before yard waste pick up started.

08:15:41 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Can we share info on the Recycling Center with business associations in the city?

08:18:40 From Alex Toupal to Everyone:

I'd be interested to take a look at that data as well!

08:20:23 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Please also look at compost data for the purpose of outreach to parts of the city with lower participation!

08:28:09 From Emily Lee (she/her) to Everyone:

In terms of opportunities to educate the community, the Central Square Farmers Market (when it starts up again) would be a great place to spread the word about composting and maybe give out compost bins/bags.

08:28:45 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Tell your neighbors, friends, n'hood groups and other Cambridge community groups about the Recycling Center at every opp you can! Put on Next Door, etc.

08:29:43 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

oh, Emily, good point. I wonder if we could get a table.. In the past some group ran into rules about who can and cannot have a space.. but that could be old news.. and maybe someone could walk around with flyers.. and a sign on their back.. or something..

08:31:04 From Stephanie Wasiuk (she/her) to Everyone:

There are also a few clothing swaps coming up (one in April held by We Thieves) - maybe an opportunity to talk about textiles and even the recycling center if it would be allowed

08:31:41 From Emily Lee (she/her) to Everyone:

Replying to "oh, Emily, good poin..."

Sandwich board for your sandwich waste 😊

08:31:50 From Emily Lee (she/her) to Everyone:

Reacted to "oh, Emily, good poin..." with 👍

08:31:56 From Emily Lee (she/her) to Everyone:

Reacted to "There are also a few..." with 👍

08:32:04 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

Replying to "oh, Emily, good poin..."

cute, Emily !

08:32:27 From Elka to Everyone:

can you share where we can get information about the clothing swap happening on the 18th.

08:33:48 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

Swap at Camb Commtty Center, 5 Callender St, Central Sq (near Howard St), 10 to 2 on Sat Mar 18.. If OK with Mike, I will send the notice to all of you on email.

08:34:13 From Elka to Everyone:

Reacted to "Swap at Camb Commtty ..." with 👍

08:34:23 From Sakiko Isomichi to Everyone:

Depending on whose data you look at, carbon emissions on production of compostable varies a lot

08:35:10 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

Stephanie.. can you tell us more about swaps? Or at least tell me.. hmsnively@aol.com.. I will be happy to share that info.. with my circles and also on the 18th.

08:35:21 From Amy Waltz to Everyone:

The curbside collections page on the website has an index of all programs including "get rid of it right," the DPW yard, all curbside collections, yard waste, composting, large items etc.. It would be very helpful, to have this page more prominent on the web page.

08:36:08 From Stephanie Wasiuk (she/her) to Everyone:

Helen - I'll gather that info and send it along!

08:36:30 From Emily Lee (she/her) to Everyone:

Reacted to "The curbside collect..." with 👍

08:36:36 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

thanks, Stephanie... and anyone who hears about clothing swaps, please let me know!

08:36:59 From Elka to Everyone:

please let all of us know..

08:38:47 From Stephanie Wasiuk (she/her) to Everyone:

Do we have a RAC group calendar (or something) where we can share upcoming events and maybe also track meetings/facilities tours? Might be helpful

08:39:25 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

I like that idea Stephanie - having a group calendar

08:39:31 From Emily Lee (she/her) to Everyone:

Replying to "Do we have a RAC gro..."

I think this would be a great idea! I've been wondering the same thing myself.

08:39:36 From Helen Snively to Everyone:
cool idea, Stephanie.. can you make one, maybe as a google doc we could all share? Of course.. if it's ok with Mike..

08:39:37 From Emily Lee (she/her) to Everyone:
Reacted to "Do we have a RAC gro..." with 👍

08:40:02 From Stephanie Wasiuk (she/her) to Everyone:
If there's interest, I can look into setting one up, should be easy enough to do through google

08:40:15 From Elka to Everyone:
Reacted to "If there's interest,..." with 👍

08:52:54 From carlie to Everyone:
Reacted to "Do we have a RAC gro..." with 👍

08:53:36 From carlie to Everyone:
Reacted to "In terms of opportun..." with 👍

08:54:36 From Elka to Everyone:
Meera can you share your email so I can get more information you the event you spoke about..

08:55:20 From Meera Singh to Everyone:
Hi Elka - ecoaction.ed@gmail.com

08:56:39 From Scott to Everyone:
Pemby's and WF both allow you to bring your own containers!

08:59:23 From Stephanie Wasiuk (she/her) to Everyone:
@green.newton on instagram

08:59:24 From Amy Waltz to Everyone:
Getting an updated message to the public of where we are at an that weCambridge has reduced trash to 68% of 2008 levels, and full participation in programs would further reduce trash below 33%!
Many households find that some easy steps have nearly eliminated waste.
Let's "Race to Zero Waste" and inspire a more sustainable future in our region!

09:00:16 From Amy Waltz to Everyone:
Cambridge has reduced trash to 68% of 2008 levels, and full participation in programs would further reduce trash below 33%!
Many households find that some easy steps have nearly eliminated waste.
Let's "Race to Zero Waste" and inspire a more sustainable future in our region!

09:01:22 From Sakiko Isomichi to Everyone:
Apologies, I have to get going. See you all next time!

09:01:44 From Audrey Ng (she/her) to Everyone:
NYC has an awesome interactive map for waste related resources/opportunities/businesses. I'm trying to find it!

09:01:51 From Helen Snively to Everyone:
bye, Sakiko.. always great to have you with us.

09:01:57 From Dailey Brannin to Everyone:

This website has some information on where you can buy in bulk - it doesn't say if you can bring your own containers for most of them but might be helpful!

<https://www.litterless.com/bulk-food-guide/massachusetts>

09:02:18 From Emily Lee (she/her) to Everyone:

Reacted to "This website has som..." with 👍

09:03:33 From Scott to Everyone:

Emily I would push WF Alewife to let you BYOC, they have for me. The cashiers always do seem to be overwhelmed by them, though.

09:03:57 From Emily Lee (she/her) to Everyone:

Reacted to "Emily I would push W..." with 👍

09:05:20 From Emily Lee (she/her) to Everyone:

Replying to "Emily I would push W..."

Last I tried they had signs on the dispensers saying you couldn't, and I wasn't sure if it was sanitation issue so I didn't want to mess with it 😊

09:06:06 From Scott to Everyone:

Ah bummer! Maybe it's changed since the last time I went.

09:06:12 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

repair clinics: Rob.. are you interested in helping Dailey or others put that together? ROb Gogan really loved them .. but now he's retired. The energy IS there but it'll take a couple people to jump in and rediscover it.

09:06:40 From Julia Tsang to Everyone:

some dunkin donuts might be franchises (?), so perhaps there is a chance they can agree!

09:06:42 From Amy Waltz to Everyone:

Sorry, that posted before I was finished, slogans can be gimmicky, but the message works without "race to zero waste." I would love to see some motivating statistics and simple "how to" included in a one page motivational environmental message for Earth day/month. I think it is important to include the idea that we can influence regional change.

09:06:55 From Dailey Brannin to Everyone:

Reacted to "some dunkin donuts m..." with 👍

09:07:53 From Stephanie Wasiuk (she/her) to Everyone:

Recircable is an Arlington-based company that works with restaurants to provide reusable take out containers and are working on building their network. Would be great if we could hook up Cambridge restaurants with them!

09:09:27 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

I just read online that Starbucks allows you to bring your clean reusable cup

09:11:17 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Richard 👍

09:11:55 From Debby Knight to Everyone:

Yes about Starbucks - since the pandemic they started up again. Many stores still ask you to place your mug/cup into a container so the staff doesn't ever touch it. I haven't been to a Starbucks that doesn't do that. In addition to the 10 cent savings, they were giving people 25

stars each time they brought a reusable! I haven't been to a Starbucks recently, so am not sure about the added stars at this point.

09:14:03 From Elka to Everyone:

B&C?

09:14:12 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Mike, if Team Green Sense still happens in the Summer Mayor's Program for HS kids, maybe they can focus on 3Rs outreach.

09:15:25 From Debby Knight to Everyone:

Love the bring your own container bulk shopping list - thanks!

09:18:16 From Stephanie Wasiuk (she/her) to Everyone:

I don't see that link in the agenda, maybe it's just my version or computer

09:19:32 From Audrey Ng (she/her) to Everyone:

This isn't the map I was thinking of, but I think this is also a good example of a useful tool that would be easy to make and contribute to - <https://www.google.com/maps/@40.7616515,-73.9537648,12.68z/data=!4m3!1m2!2s-CnDx5dbxrtuP8kpheJvFcWrglysw!3e3>

09:20:48 From Tracie Gordon to Everyone:

I'm interested and working with anyone to educate the children and create events for them to participate.

09:21:57 From Audrey Ng (she/her) to Everyone:

Agreed, Tracie!

09:26:03 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

There's talk in the news about Tik Tok being banned in the US maybe.....?

09:26:10 From Deborah Galef to Everyone:

Please send us this list of events with dates and times.

09:26:14 From Dawn Quirk to Everyone:

Is there a map of the city with trash days?

09:26:22 From Julia Tsang to Everyone:

I'd like to help with the bin tagging in April

09:28:15 From Dawn Quirk to Everyone:

thanks!

09:28:26 From Tracie Gordon to Everyone:

Should we send ideas for events to you, MIKE?

09:28:36 From Quinten Steenhuis to Everyone:

Reacted to "Please send us this ..." with 👍

09:29:16 From Emily Lee (she/her) to Everyone:

Replying to "Is there a map of th..."

Like <https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/publicworksdepartment/recyclingandrubbish/Docs/schedulerrouteandholidayinfo2021.pdf> ?

09:29:31 From Dawn Quirk to Everyone:

Reacted to "Like <https://www.cam...>" with 👍

09:30:31 From Emily Lee (she/her) to Everyone:



Sorry, I have to drop off for a meeting. Excited about all the great ideas we have going

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC)



Photo from 2018

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC)

- Established in 1991, after recycling in Cambridge began in 1989 with a few volunteers
- The RAC is a volunteer committee which provides advice, recommendations, and assistance to the Department of Public Works (DPW) regarding recycling, composting, reuse, and waste reduction. The RAC does this through research, feedback, public outreach, and event planning.
- The RAC has helped the city implement and advise on the Zero Waste Master Plan, curbside composting, Fix-It Clinics, marketing and education, and other important initiatives that have made Cambridge a national leader in waste reduction.

Collaboration with Arts Council: Art and Reuse

- Electrical Department was retrofitting street lamps. DPW wanted to find a creative way to reuse street lamp covers
- Mary Verhage and Cambridge Arts had been in conversation about how artists might incorporate discarded materials in their creations.
- Cambridge artist Andy Graydon turned the plastic light covers into a collection of drums that all museum visitors are welcome to play.



[“City Lights Orchestra”](#)—was on view at the DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum for 1 year

RAC Highlights (2020)

- Reuse Committee: Created list of businesses that do repairs was posted on [Find It Cambridge webpage](#)

Category (type of repair shop)	Name	Neighborhood	Site visits? (Y)	Address
Cell Phone Repair	uBreakiFix	Harvard		950 Massachusetts Av
Clothing Repair	Le Couturier	Porter		1738 Massachusetts A
Clothing Repair	Gabary House of Alterations	Central		550 Massachusetts Av
Clothing Repair	Jack's Tailoring	Porter		1937 Massachusetts A
Clothing Repair	Queen Dressmaker	West Cambridge		37 Belmont Street, Ca
Computer Repair	uBreakiFix	Harvard		951 Massachusetts Av
Computer Repair	On The Spot Repairs	East Cambridge		819 Cambridge St, Ca
Electronics Repair	Audio Lab	Harvard		36 JFK St., Cambridge
Electronics Repair	Boston iPhone Repair	Harvard		1208 Massachusetts A
Electronics Repair	The Repair Palace	Central		10 b Magazine St., Ca
Furniture Repair	The Caning Shoppe	Somerville		99 Albion Street Studi

RAC Highlights (2020)

- Food waste committee generated “Rehash It—Don’t Trash It” series on food waste reduction for monthly newsletter.

COOKING

Stovetop Alchemy: Making Candied Citrus Rinds & Citrus Simple Syrup from a lockdown pantry

By Suzanne Wong

Saturday, May 2, 2020



Candied Citrus Rinds. (Photo: Suzanne Wong)

RAC
Issue #1
Newslette
REHASH IT - DON'T TRASH IT
FOOD WASTE REDUCTION TIPS FROM THE RAC

REHASH SPOTLIGHT: BROCCOLI STEMS

Broccoli hailed as America's favorite vegetable, is more than just fluffy florets. A derivative of cabbage, broccoli is a mustard family member related to brussels sprouts, kale, cauliflower, and kohlrabi. Originating in the Mediterranean, it has been cultivated since Roman times and made its way to California in 1923. However, broccoli did not become a significant commercial crop in the U.S. until after World War II.

An excellent source of vitamins B1, B6, C, E, K, chromium, and folic acid, our favorite tree-like vegetable is also a good source of dietary fiber, pantothenic acid, manganese, phosphorus, choline, and so much more! Sadly, the nutritious stalks are often discarded. Stalks are not only tasty - more mild than sweet - they're also low calorie and offer more fiber than florets. With a little extra cooking time, stalks are a great addition to stir-frys, salads, soups, or sliced raw and dipped in your favorite dressings.

To prepare first cut the lower 1-2 inches, this section tends to be tough and woody. Remove the skin with a vegetable peeler; after a few passes, the pale green flesh is revealed. We're all about rehashing, so freeze those scraps for vegetable stock. Once peeled, the stalk can be sliced into thin rounds and enjoyed as is or added to your favorite dish.

No matter how you choose to enjoy stalks, this addition to your meal rotation is sure to please. By using florets for a separate meal, you can create two meals from a single broccoli purchase.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Hello Reader, we're the Recycling Advisory that forgotten box of pasta or grains we all have in

BROCCOLI

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- 1 ex
- 1 ts
- 2 Pe
- 1/4
- 1/4
- 1/4
- Salt

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tender,
Sauté
until c
stalks a
Using
liquely
cup at
desired
then all
min.

- Compost sub-committee had two articles published in Cambridge Day about food waste repurposing

Articles written by RAC

Friday, February 28, 2020

- Martha Henry has written 5 articles for Cambridge Day
- [30% reduction goal](#)
- [Textiles](#)
- [Christmas Trees](#)
- [Recycling Contamination](#)
- [Zero Waste Master Plan](#)



Cambridge has curbside recycling and composting in addition to trash pickup. (Photo: Martha Henry)

Cambridge residents have reduced the amount of trash they throw out by 60

RAC Highlights (2021)

- Discussed options for textiles recycling options and outreach
- Wrote letter to Commissioner on single-use plastics and small trash carts; ultimately COVID stopped the conversation on plastics ordinance
- Learned from each other on the RAC:
 - Holden and Catrina shared their work on food waste
 - Richard shared his work on polymers and plastics

RAC Highlights (2021)

- Had conversation with GLSD, Waste Management, DPW Commissioner O'Riordan about how food waste is managed
- After nearly 30 years, Rob Gogan stepped down from RAC
- Met with Inspectional Services to learn about rodent management
- Learned about Extended Producer Responsibility
- Election Day outreach

RAC Highlights (2022)

- Received update on Zero Waste Master Plan
- Learned from each other on the RAC:
 - Susy shared about MIT's waste programs and Rheaply, a reuse platform
 - Meera shared info on India's waste management systems
- Helped draft new annual waste mailer to residents
- Get update on State Legislation (bottle bill, EPR)
- Reviewed Solid Waste Ordinance
- Created advertisement for CPS to share info about textiles recycling with parents

RAC Outreach Highlights (2020-2022)



RAC Outreach Highlights (2020-2022)



RAC Outreach Highlights (2020-2022)



RAC Outreach Highlights (2020-2022)



What would the City like to see RAC do?

- Outreach
 - Curbside bin-tagging (see photos)
 - Bring Your Own Bag Ordinance Outreach (bag survey, giving out bags)
 - Spread the word on electronic forums
 - Zero Waste Cambridge FB group
 - NextDoor, neighborhood listservs.
 - Take over the [Cambridge Fixing & Repair FB group](#)
 - General tabling in Squares, high-traffic areas
 - Attend major events (Mayfair, Fresh Pond Day, etc)
 - Outreach at Northpoint after the launch of the drop-off site



What would the City like to see RAC do?

- Specific projects:
 - Generate 1-pager for businesses on how to reduce waste
 - Generate list of businesses that offer incentives for reusable mugs
 - Tips for Reduce/Reuse section of e-newsletter