

## Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee

December 11, 1008

Minutes Taken by Cornelia Herzfeld

	Tons	Lbs Per Capita
Dec 2008 Recycling	1153	22.8
Dec 2007 Recycling	1113	21.9
Dec 2008 Trash	1957	38.6
Dec 2007 Trash	1854	36.6

**Members Attending:** Rob Gogan, Harvard; Ryan Gray, MIT; Adam Mitchell, Save That Stuff; Cornelia Herzfeld, Cambridge resident; Judy Nathans, Cambridge resident; Andrea Yonge, FCR-Boston/Casella

**Guests Attending:** Mark Evans, FCR-Boston/Casella; Randi Mail, Cambridge Recycling Director

### Market Update

Mark reported that the price of newspaper had gone down again and that of high grade paper was also coming down. Generally, prices and activity were weak; the Yellow Sheet prices now seemed more in line with those the paper mills were offering, unlike the situation he had reported in November.

### MA DEP Revising Solid Waste Master Plan

Randi reported that she had attended a meeting at DEP concerning the revision of the Solid Waste Master Plan. Four questions framed the discussion:

1. How to prevent waste?
2. How to increase the supply of recyclables?
3. How to build recycling markets?
4. How to get the most from residuals?

A representative of the Newark Group, a paper mill in Fitchburg, reported that about 15% of single stream loads at their facility ended up as residuals. Adam pointed out that a high percentage of residuals was a problem in the early stages of single stream recycling. Older programs on the west coast, now report significantly lower residuals, which originally had been high. He added that as prices go down, the concern for the quality of the recycling materials increases.

### Recycling Markets in Decline

Randi said she received several calls from the media and some from concerned residents about how the economic situation is affecting recycling revenues. The December email update she sent out addressed this question:

*Recent news has reported dramatic changes in recycling markets. When the economy declines, the market for finished products declines and therefore*

*the market for recycled materials. Baled material is temporarily being stored in warehouses. This is a cyclical industry that has seen price swings before.*

*Currently, commodity prices exceed market value, so the City is paying for recyclables processing rather than earning revenue. Even in times when the City does not earn revenue, we still save money because disposal is more expensive than recyclables processing.*

*Ultimately, [the City strongly encourages citizen to keep recycling!](#) MA Waste Bans still prohibit recyclables from the trash. So, if trash trucks are found with too much recyclable material, the waste transfer station could reject these loads and impose fines. Plus, [City Ordinance](#) has mandated recycling since 1991.*

*This market decline offers a few distinct opportunities:*

1. [Commit to recycling quality.](#)  
*FCR-Boston consistently reports that Cambridge recyclables are cleaner than most other communities. Keep up the good work and make sure that recycling is free from trash and food contamination.*
2. [Commit to purchasing products made with post-consumer recycled material.](#)  
*You're not really recycling unless you are buying recycled! Buy office paper or toilet tissue with a high post-consumer recycled content. Work to ensure that your household and workplace buys recycled paper products. Recycling-based manufacturing avoids extracting virgin natural resources to make new products and [saves energy.](#)*
3. [Commit to reducing waste.](#)

*Aside from the economics, remember that recycling is good for the environment! Did you know that when we bury biodegradable materials like paper products, food scraps and yard trimmings in a landfill, they decompose without oxygen and emit methane?*

*Methane is a major greenhouse gas that is now understood to be 72 times more potent than CO2 over a 20-year period. So... recycling and composting are terrific ways for each of us to do something every day to reduce climate change.*

### **Single Stream Recycling**

Randi asked members how they thought single stream recycling would affect recycling economics. Rob responded that recycling revenues and trash disposal costs would decrease as trash volume drops due to increased recycling.

Randi said that DPW was thinking about a pilot program in single stream recycling and whether a possible pilot should involve Recycle Bank. Representatives from Recycle Bank have provided new financing options for participating municipalities. Rather than charging the community a fee per household, Recycle Bank is offering to share in avoided disposal costs from increased recycling.

In addition, Recycle Bank was allowing shared containers and therefore offering shared incentives for multi-family buildings, which comprise more than 90% of the housing stock in Cambridge.

Some members suggested starting the pilot without Recycle Bank, which could be incorporated later if it seemed that incentives might be necessary. The Committee agreed to have the pilot in both a high and low participation neighborhood, and discussed how to measure effectiveness. Some said that the pilot would have to be successful as it would be extremely difficult to train residents to sort materials once trained for single stream. FCR has branded the term "Zero Sort Recycling" for single stream programs.

Adam reported that, with single stream, Brookline had 20% less trash; Rob reported that Harvard's single stream recycling had pushed recycling rates from 44% to 56% and had saved 5% on its budget.

Ryan added that MIT currently has a "Free Meet" every quarter or so, where items are categorized and then swapped throughout the day. Remaining items are given to local shelters. There are also item-specific swaps (i.e. baby clothes) swaps 2-3 times a year. MIT staff have discussed the idea of an institute-wide swap on a regular basis.