

Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee
February 28, 2008 – Minutes taken by Judith Nathans

Members Attending: Cornelia Herzfeld, Cambridge resident; Rob Gogan, Harvard University; Ted Live, Cambridge resident; Judy Nathans, Cambridge resident; Paul Schlaver, Cambridge Consumers Council; Luis Baigorria, Cambridge Housing Authority, Doane Perry, Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Association

Guests Present: Jim Ardolino, Solid Waste Superintendent; Randi Mail, Recycling Director

Report on New Pilot Food Waste Drop-off Program

Randi reported on the new pilot program accepting food waste from residents at the Drop-off Center, running through July. She sent an email blast about it to ~800 residents who previously contacted the office. Several forwarded it to other neighborhood groups and some posted the flyer in their apartment/condo buildings.

As of 4/2/08, there are 4 toters, 64-gallon toters for organics at the Center. Each is lined with a regular plastic bag, held securely by a giant rubber band. Residents empty their food waste directly into the toters; some bring it in paper bags. When the Center is closed, we shovel a small amount of Christmas tree mulch on top to reduce odors, twist/cinch the bag and lock the lid shut. Residents can get a free 2 ½ gallon food buckets, 1 per household.

Since the program's inception in February, 250+ residents have signed up and the goal of collecting 400 lbs/week was met in the 3rd week. We have collected nearly 4000 lbs of organics averaging over 550 lbs/week! It's clear that residents are very excited to participate in this program. Since many are brand-new users, we provide a [map](#).

Two volunteers: Aleks Strubs, a BU student and Helen Snively, a Cambridge resident have effectively recruited participants during open hours. Intern, Nupur Hiremath, is documenting and analyzing the program via interviews and surveys. She will submit a status report in May.

3000 backyard composters have been sold since program began in the 1990s. Members suggested that a student contact homecomposters to ask if they actively compost. Randi said that since DPW raised the price for SoilMakers to \$50, sales have actually increased.

Members asked how residents purchasing composters are educated about rodent control. Each resident buying a bin is given a rodent brochure and a square piece of wire mesh to put under the assembled bin. Recycling staff remind the resident not to put any meat/dairy in the bin, to cover up food waste with "browns" each time, along with other tips to [keep the bin free from rodents](#).

April-October the City offers free compost to residents in small quantities at the Center during open hours. This compost is bought from the Town of Lexington. The finished compost sold at the farm processing the organics collected at the Center and businesses is more expensive.

The pilot program will likely continue past July provided that rodent activity in the DPW yard is not affected and residents continue to keep food waste free from

contamination. There has been no increase in rodent activity in the DPW yard since the program began. The organics toters are locked, lined and odors are controlled. Jim sits on the City's Rodent Task Force, and reported fewer complaints but problems persist east of Harvard Square and in Cambridgeport. He favors composting as a rodent control strategy.

Rob asked how many dwellings have garbage disposals. He was aware that DPW's Sewer Division does not want residents installing them because food wastes can clog the old pipes in buildings and ultimately the City's sewer lines. Rob said that new LEED developments have garbage disposers.

Report on MassRecycle Municipal Recycler's

Judy reported on topics covered at the workshop including Getting to Zero Waste, What Your Waste Provider Wants You to Know, and Beyond the Curb-Paper Sorting and Remanufacturing, an End Users Perspective.

The main interest generated was the paper session. Paper Processors want communities to think about educating resident more that "wet strength" grades are hard to recycle such as frozen food containers. They were not comfortable with the slogan "If it Rips, Recycle it" and thought it should be revised. Rob and Randi felt that it was important to communicate that all paper is accepted in order to maximize material diverted since studies show that residents will recycle more of all materials if the rules are simple and straightforward.

Randi mentioned that Cambridge recently joined the [MassRecycle Paper Campaign](#)

Random Tidbits

- Rob said Commissioner Peterson is very positive and interested in the topic of zero waste and the RAC should continue to pursue it. Randi awaits a detailed outline of EcoCycle's workshop. The National Recycling Coalition Conference will focus on the topic.
- Randi's next worm composting workshop is April 22 at 6pm at the Harvest Coop in Central Square.
- Next [household hazardous waste collection](#) is April 26.
- Paul reported that the Central Square Post Office won an award for environment practices.
- Judy mentioned a [Globe article](#) about Boston's plans to study the possibility to build an urban compost facility.

Next Meeting: April 10, 2008

