

DRAFT

City of Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee

January 9, 2013 – Minutes Taken by Claire Davies

Members Present: Michael Arnott, George Delegas, Claire Davies, Rob Gogan, Adam Mitchell, Robert Winters
Members Absent: Luis Baigiorria, Liza Casella, Mike Cosgrove, Jan Dillon Jarrod Jones, Debby Galef, Juliana Lyman, Laura Nichols
Staff Present: Meryl Brott, Randi Mail
Guests Present: Ted Live, Cambridge resident; Jack Manning, Casella; Helen Snively, Cambridge resident

No quorum, so approval for December 2012 minutes tabled for February. No public comment.

Tonnage Update

For curbside recycling and trash statistics. **Tons recycled YTD** through Dec 2012 was 9,205 tons, up 1.3% from 9,089 tons for the same time period in 2011. Tons recycled in Dec 2012 were 802 tons versus 777 tons in Dec 2011, up 3%. **Tons disposed* YTD** through Dec 2012 was 15,254 tons, down X% from 15,756 tons in 2011. Tons disposed in Dec 2012 were 1,213 tons versus 1,240 tons for 2011, down 3%. (*Tons disposed includes city collected trash from about 31,500 households, public schools and city buildings. It does not include multi-family buildings served by private haulers, businesses, or universities.) The city is on target for its goal of 16 lbs of trash per household by 2020 given 2012 performance, which was XX lbs of trash per household. In 2008, it was 22 lbs of trash per household.

City Updates

12/16/12 City Council Hearing on Plastic Bag Ban

City Councilors present were Majorie Decker, Minka vanBeuzekom, Leland Cheung, Henrietta Davis and Craig Kelley. Phil Sego a Cambridge resident and Sierra Club representative and spoke about the health impacts to wildlife of plastic bags in the environment. Nancy Schlacter from the City Manager's Office reviewed a document she put together that summarized common elements of bans from 13 different US communities she surveyed and interviewed with bans in place. The document covered: what plastic bags are included, how reusable bags are encouraged, how reduction of paper bags is encouraged, types of retailers/establishments are affected, timeframe for implementation, what enforcement looks like, costs associated with outreach/implementation campaigns, and a description/status of the recent MA Senate Bill (SB2314). At the request of the City Council committee, staff from the Law Department, City Manager's office, Public Works, and Community Development is working together on a draft ordinance.

[Plastic bags](#) are accepted at the Cambridge Recycling Center, Shaws/Star Market, Whole Foods, Harvest Coop, and Market Basket. While recycling is a good last resort, the better thing to do is reduce waste and use of plastic bags overall.

Composting Update

DPW is partnering with the [Cambridge Winter Farmers Market](#) for a new pilot program for Cambridge residents to [drop-off food scraps](#). From January-April 30, 2013, residents can bring scraps to the market on Saturdays from 10am-2pm, in the gym of the Cambridge Community Center at 5 Callender St, in the Riverside neighborhood. The compost totes will be kept on the Howard St side of the building. Residents can also place food scraps in these green totes at any time. Just open the combination lock (code 480 posted on the toter), make your deposit, then replace the lock. The lock discourages disposal of other items. DPW will pay for the pilot. Save That Stuff will empty the bins weekly. Cambridge residents can also drop-off food scraps at the Recycling Center during open hours (147 Hampshire St, Tues/Thurs 4pm-7:30pm and Sat 9am-4pm) and at Whole Foods (115 Prospect St, Everyday 7:30am-10:30pm).

Q: Can the farm vendors take scraps? A: An attempt last year did not work well. Randi noted that [Grow NYC](#) has a food scrap collection program at select green markets. The scraps are not taken by the farm vendors due to existing hauling regulations. Instead, the scraps are hauled by Grow NYC or the Dept of Sanitation to large scale community compost sites (managed by non-profits/volunteer crews). 1,000,000 pounds has been collected in the first 1 ½ years.

DPW is working with the Human Service Department to begin a compost program at the Cambridge Senior Center for the Food Pantry and dining hall kitchen (aka "back of the house"). As this program develops, it will also be expanded to the cafeteria (aka "front of the house"), Windsor House, and for events held at the Center's community space.

DPW Facebook Page

Chris Neil, DPW's new Community Relations Manager, has reinvigorated social media efforts by proactively posting content from the [monthly recycling eNewsletter](#) at www.facebook.com/CambridgeDPW. He and Randi are working on an outreach calendar for 2013. Randi encouraged members to "Like" Cambridge Public Works on Facebook and to "Like" posts on occasion to help spread the word. One recurring post will be a "Zero Waste Challenge" and Randi welcomes ideas on ways to reduce waste throughout the year, including seasonally appropriate ideas.

February Meeting – Joint with Climate Protection Action Committee (CPAC)

Randi said that members of CPAC will be coming to the February meeting to talk about topics of common interest joint interest with RAC including zero waste, product stewardship, and business recycling.

Discussion Topics

Council Seeking RAC Input on Brookline Ban on Polystyrene-Based Disposable Food Containers

The Town of Brookline recently passed a by-law to prohibit these containers, and the Cambridge City Council asked the RAC for their input (note that only six of thirteen RAC members were present for the discussion). Adam was present at the Brookline meeting, and said lobbyists from the plastic industry were there. Overall, members suggested that the City should take actions that move toward zero waste, push for reusable containers, and citywide education.

Questions RAC members had: Is the ban for polystyrene or just Styrofoam, which should be referred to as “expanded polystyrene”? What “food service establishments” are affected? Who will enforce? Would this include Styrofoam trays used in the school cafeterias? What would the cost implication be for the City? Does a ban on Styrofoam lead us to the ultimate goal of zero waste? Zero waste goals focus more on “upstream” strategies versus “downstream”.

Comments during discussion: Rob G. is not in favor of banning polystyrene since it is “inert, cheaper, and the environmental consequences are inflated”. He wants the City to consider a zero waste goal and work to reduce single-use service ware through reuse instead of banning a specific material. Notes Starbucks example of \$1 reusable cups. George would like to hear more facts comparing the health and environmental impacts of polystyrene and its alternatives before reaching a firm conclusion. Members also want to know if the City’s trash is incinerated or landfilled. Randi noted that trash is incinerated at the Waste Management facility in Saugus. However, beginning July 2013, the City trash will be brought to Allied Waste in Roxbury and it will be sent to both landfills and incinerators. Rob W. asked what is the motivation for the ban? Because it is hard-to-recycle? Aesthetics? Because it has a bad reputation, is it justified? Michael suggests partnering with nearby communities to build a polystyrene processing plant. Claire notes that either way it behooves the committee to have a position on this material.

Randi is interested in a ban given that [dozens of towns in California](#) have banned expanded polystyrene containers. She noted that the DPW’s climate goals reviewed with the RAC include seeking bans on “problem materials” - materials that are expensive to recycle, have limited recycling markets, and public health and environmental concerns. Recycling is the last resort for diverting materials from incineration or landfill. Reducing and reusing materials should be priority. Also, it may be short sighted to compare the price of materials when the true costs may be externalized.

Resources:

- [Clean Water Action](#). Provides factsheets on health, environment, costs, and climate impacts.
- [Green Restaurant Association](#). Statements on the problem and solution for different disposable food service materials, including polystyrene foam/Styrofoam.
- Articles: Migration of styrene from polystyrene foam food-contact articles, Food and Chemical Toxicology, Volume 33, Issue 6, June 1995, Pages 475–481 and Migration of styrene from plastic packaging based on polystyrene into food stimulants, Polymer International, Volume: 61 Number: 1 Date: January 2012, Pages: 141-148
- [You Know Styrene.org](#). A resource for consumers, employees and communities
- *Relative merits of polystyrene foam and paper in hot drink cups: Implications for packaging" from the Nov/Dec 91 issue of "Environmental Management: <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2F978-1-4020-2394-1#page-1>*
- Rob G. notes that Frank Ackerman, author of *Why Do We Recycle* (1996) says comparing weights is a quick-and-dirty (but usually effective) way to assess lifecycle impacts of different packaging. Using a food scale, he weighed three cups (without plastic lids or paper sleeves): Dunkin' Donuts 14-ounce polystyrene cup (5 grams), Starbucks 14-ounce paper cup (13 grams), and Dunkin' Donuts 10-ounce paper cup (10 grams). The lowest-impact cup by the Ackerman method is the DD polystyrene cup. Note that paper cups weigh even more when customers add paper sleeves, extra napkins or an extra cup to cool the hot surface. See the trash weight implications of this tendency: www.foamfacts.com/comparison and analyses of paper vs. foam cups that show foam to have less impact: www.ecojoes.com/styrofoam-cups-vs-paper-cups and <http://blog.maxdunn.com/articles/2008/11/21/paper-versus-polystyrene-cups>.



Upcoming Meetings (Minute Takers): Feb 6 (Debby), Mar 6 (Juliana), Apr 10 (Robert W.), May 8 (Mike), Jun 12 (Adam)

Adjourn: The Committee adjourned at 9:40 AM.

Plastic Bag Bans/Restrictions Executive Summary

Upon review of the plastic bag bans for 13 different communities in California (6), Texas (2), Washington (2), Oregon (1), Connecticut (1) and Washington, DC (1), further inquiry was made with regard to five of the more robust plans, including Austin, TX, Portland, OR, San Francisco and Santa Monica, CA and Seattle, WA. All of these, except Santa Monica (population 89,736), were cities larger than Cambridge, ranging in population from Portland (583,776) to Austin (812,025).

All ban use of Single Use plastic checkout bags with handles

Seattle also bans compostable, biodegradable and photodegradable single use checkout bags

Santa Monica also bans single use plastic checkout bags made from bio-based sources

All encourage use of reusable bags

Define reusable in various ways: with handles, made from durable materials, cloth, washable, designed for multiple reuse, certain thickness (if plastic, typically, >2.25 mils thick); CA standard = min 125 uses/min 22 lbs/able to carry for 175' distance

All sought to reduce use of paper bags, too

3 cities charge for providing paper bags (not less than 5¢, 10¢, 25¢)

Retailers retain collected funds

Define type of paper bags that can be provided

Require minimum percentage of post consumer recycled content (PCRC)

Require Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified paper

No old growth fiber

Printed w/"recyclable" or "reusable"

All permitted plastic bags (w/o handles) for particular uses, including:

laundry; dry-cleaning; door hanger; newspaper; packages of multiple bags for garbage, pet waste, yard waste; restaurant take-home; bulk items; meat, poultry and fish wrap; prepared foods; pharmacist provided Rx items; potted plants; flowers; greeting cards

Types of covered establishments:

All retail, commercial or non-profit **or**

Particularized retail including some or all of the following:

by size of establishments (gross annual sales in excess of \$####);

type of establishments (supermarkets of a certain size [square footage and/or gross sales];

full-line self- service retail of a certain size; and

government agencies; street vendors; vendors at public events; clothing; food and beverage;

household goods; jewelry; grocery, pharmacies; liquor stores; restaurants; or were more

generically described as all commercial enterprises, for-profit or non-profit.

Phased-in bans/programs over 6 months to one year

Education component as key: educate retailers and consumers

Education campaigns, including:

websites, FAQs, retail guidelines, downloadable/printable signage, "bring your own bag"

campaigns, mailings, reusable bag giveaways

alliances with local non-profits and environmental groups to get the message out to different

language/cultural groups.

Enforcement was minimal, typically, with goal of educating

Warnings given for first violations, with graduated fees for repeat violations

Goal to change behavior, not collect enforcement fee.

No inspections; complaint driven enforcement

Costs for outreach/implementation campaigns were noted in the \$40,000 to \$50,000 range, with one (Austin) at \$2 million

Funds were used for staff time in outreach effort to retailers, primarily.

Most said the costs were absorbed in the regular workload of their staff

The recent MA Senate Bill (SB2314), which has not yet passed, is an amalgam of many of the features described above. It makes no mention of recyclable paper bags, however, but does include an element not part of any of the laws reviewed, in particular the “Marine degradable plastic bag” description. If passed, this law would permit distribution of single use checkout bags that meet both Marine biodegradable plastic and Compostable plastic bag standards.