

City of Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee
March 6, 2013 – DRAFT Minutes Taken by Liza Casella

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

Minutes were approved for February.

Market Update

Market is pretty stable at this point. Fiber increased \$5/ton per the Yellow Sheet. Plastics have increased the most significantly, anywhere from \$40-\$100/ton depending on the grade. This is due to the continual rise in gas prices. We expect fiber market to stabilize for the coming months and plastics to remain high. For February ACR is \$83.69 and the fee for single stream recycling is -\$5.65/ton. The City pays \$15/ton for recycling processing and then shares 50% of any revenue when the ACR is above \$65/ton.

Tonnage Update

For curbside recycling and trash statistics. **Tons recycled in** Feb 2013 was 655 tons versus 691 tons for 2012, down 5%. **Tons disposed*** disposed in Feb 2013 were 1,001 tons versus 1,128 tons for 2012, down 11%. The blizzard greatly reduced curbside setouts. (*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 (HH) by 2020, given 18.7 lbs/HH of trash in 2012. In 2008, it was 22 lbs/HH of trash.

City Updates

CPAC Recommendation on Plastic Bag Ban

CPAC submitted the following to the City Manager: *"CPAC recommends that the City include in any ordinance that bans single use plastic bags a requirement that retail stores impose a fee on paper bags and require a minimum amount of post-consumer recycled content. Given that it is a priority of the City of Cambridge to reduce and minimize greenhouse gas emissions, CPAC recommends that the climate change implications of the proposed plastic bag ban ordinance be considered and taken into account. Most ordinances that ban plastic bags are structured as efforts to discourage single use bags of any sort and encourage the use of reusable bags. The [Green Cities California report](#) provides support that reusable bags are the best option."*

The recommendation also discusses the results of the GCC report which notes that 1) most plastic bags in CA end up in landfills or as litter; 2) while paper bags are recycled at a high rate, they have significantly larger GHG emissions (2-3 times more) over its lifetime and results in greater atmospheric acidification, water consumption, and ozone production than plastic bags; 3) biodegradable bags have greater environmental impacts, GHG emissions, and water consumption than plastic bags and only degrade under composting conditions; 4) reusable bags made of cloth or plastic (especially non-woven) designed to be reused up to hundreds of times have significantly lower environmental impacts on a per-use basis than single-use bags; and 5) around the world, fees and bans on bags result in dramatic drops in consumption.

Discussion went back and forth on whether to support a fee on paper bags. Committee went through several attempts to define a motion to ban single use plastic bags with a 5 cent mandatory fee on paper bags, but the majority was not in favor. Rob G. suggests a fee on all single use products including paper/plastic bags, to-go ware etc. to ensure consumer buy in, and ultimately move toward a zero waste goal for the City. Some members expressed concerns about the impact of a fee on paper bags on retail shops. Whole Foods & Savenor's include the bag cost into their charge to consumers. Rob W. suggests that the City require that stores give customers a rebate if they use reusable bags, to balance out a fee on single use bags.

Update on CHA Pilot

Meryl updated the committee on the CHA pilot to improve recycling at 4 housing properties (Washington Elms, Newtowne Court, Roosevelt Towers, and Millers River), for total of 457 households. Meryl is working closely with these property managers and CHA administrators to launch efforts at each property involving resident education, in-unit bags or bins for residents to make recycling easier, recycling signs at trash areas and consistent, equal access to recycling, and training for custodians to monitor and maintain the recycling totes. Property managers have invited Meryl to speak with building residents and building managers have distributed in-unit containers to residents to collect recyclables and easily transport materials to the recycling totes in the common areas. If properties meet the goal to double the amount of recycling for at least four weeks in a row, CHA will reward the property with a gift such as a flat screen TV in the community room.

Discussion Topics

Council Seeking RAC Input on Polystyrene-Based Disposable Food Containers (continued from Jan, Feb)

Randi reviewed a draft recommendation that summarizes the RAC discussions on a possible EPS ban. Some edits were suggested and incorporated and the final recommendation was sent to the DPW Commissioner, which she then forwarded to the City Manager and Law Department. See recommendation attached. Rob G., Claire, Debbie & Michael have formed a subcommittee on materials and EPR (extended producer responsibility) to review the resources on impacts of expanded polystyrene and further guide RAC's recommendation to the City on issues related to EPR. CPAC members will be invited to participate in this subcommittee.

Randi noted that she heard that the new Director of Food & Nutrition Services for the Boston Public Schools supposedly phased out most use of EPS in schools with cafeterias due to health and environmental concerns and hormone disruption studies, she plans to call and find out more information on this.

Upcoming Meetings (Minute Takers): Apr 10 (Robert W.), May 8 (Mike), Jun 12 (Adam)

City of Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee
March 19, 2013

Communication to Public Works Commissioner on City Council's Request for input on Possible Ban on Polystyrene-Based Disposable Food Containers

The City Council asked the Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) for input regarding a possible ban on polystyrene-based disposable food containers, take-out and beverage containers, similar to a by-law recently passed at a Brookline Town meeting.

RAC recommends that the City adopt policies that favor or incentivize reusable and/or compostable containers (with a compost collection infrastructure) and reduce or discourage single-use service ware. Zero waste goals and drastically reducing waste are the bottom line. A possible ban on Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) is just a step towards these larger goals. After several discussions on this issue at our January, February and March meetings, RAC does not have an official position on whether to ban EPS. In order to consider this, we will:

- 1. Form a subcommittee on materials and extended producer responsibility and invite members of the Climate Protection Committee to participate.**
- 2. Conduct further research and review of resources that DPW staff has identified which discuss the health and environmental impacts of EPS. These resources include CalRecycle, Clean Water Action, Green Restaurant Association, You Know Styrene.org, and scientific articles that look at migration of styrene from plastic packaging into food, by-products of this migration in the form of hormone disruptors, and lifecycle assessments of different packaging materials.**

Regarding a possible ban on EPS, RAC has the following questions:

- What is the motivation? Health? Environmental? It's not accepted for recycling? Aesthetics?
- Is EPS's bad reputation justified? Is there a place for EPS since it is inexpensive and inert in the landfill? What about incineration, since City trash is also burned? Are the environmental impacts inflated?
- What are the conclusions of lifecycle assessments of different packaging materials related to greenhouse gas emissions, resource use, trash generation, pollution, litter, etc.?
- Is the proposed ban for polystyrene or just "expanded polystyrene", also known as "Styrofoam"?
- What food service establishments would be affected?
- Who will enforce the ordinance?
- Would this include Styrofoam trays used in the school cafeterias? If so, what are the costs for the City?
- Given that zero waste goals focus more on "upstream" strategies versus "downstream", does a ban on Styrofoam lead us to zero waste?

The RAC provides advice, assistance and recommendations on the City's recycling, toxics reduction and waste prevention programs, and implementation of strategies to meet the goals in the City's Climate Protection Plan and the MA Solid Waste Master Plan. We understand that DPW's climate goals include seeking bans on "problem materials", those that are expensive to recycle, have limited recycling markets, and public health and environmental concerns. We agree that reducing and reusing materials are priority strategies, while recycling is the last resort for diverting materials from incineration or landfill.