

Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee

February 12, 2009

Minutes taken by Robert Winters

Members Present: Kevin Douglas, F.W. Russell; Rob Gogan, Harvard; Ryan Gray, MIT; Cornelia Herzfeld, Cambridge resident; Judy Nathans, Cambridge resident; Robert Winters, Cambridge resident

Guests Present: Meryl Brott; Recycling Program Manager; David Demme, R.W. Beck; Randi Mail, Recycling Director

Market Update

Kevin gave a hauler's perspective and some history of market fluctuations. Rob G. added that commodity prices for recyclables were lousy in the 70's, perked up in the late 80's with landfill closings, then took off in the 1990's.

[Executive Order 12874](#) from President Clinton in 1993 set standards and spurred incentives for use of post-consumer recycled paper, among other action items. China's economy has grown at 10%/year since the late 80's. The current recovery will likely be long and slow. However, China will continue to industrialize and India is just getting started.

Robert observed a link between recessions and downturns in recycling markets. Rob clarified that it's more specifically tied to industrial markets. Rob noted that many recyclable materials that had been stockpiled by processors are now gone - evidence that markets may be slowly recovering.

Randi asked about the background of the American Plastics Council's [resin identification codes](#), the #1-7 marked on plastic products. Robert noted that when the system was first introduced, it did not entirely meet with the approval of recycling advocates.

Rob noted (and sang) the new Pete Seeger Grammy Award-winning song on recycling.

School Composting – Food to Flowers

Randi updated the Committee of the progress with plans for the King Open School to begin a lunchroom composting program on March 11th. Visit the new [website](#) on the program for details.

All leftover food and soiled paper will be accepted, including meat and cheese. There have been ongoing meetings planning the program with the School Dept and King Open staff, including Principal Tim Groves, Teacher Donna Peruzzi and custodian Bob Medeiros,

who are all very supportive. Two 30-minute assemblies (K-4 and 5-8) will be held on March 11, where Meryl will give a 15-minute slide show that details how to compost and how recycling and composting protect nature and animals. Student videos on composting and reducing trash will be shown. Randi and Meryl met with the teachers on March 3 and all are excited. Meryl has been visiting classes to train students as compost monitors.

In the fall, DPW learned that the Cambridgeport School has been composting fruit & veggie scraps for 1 year. The family liaison takes it home to her backyard compost bin. In addition, for over 10 years, Cambridgeport students pour liquids into a separate bucket which the custodian pours down the drain. This is a best practice to lighten trash loads, reduce odors at trash dumpsters and keep liquids out of the compost. The King Open will start doing this and DPW hopes that all schools will as well.

DPW and the School Dept are working hard to ensure that everyone understands that plastics and other trash cannot be placed in the compost. Local farms will not tolerate contamination, as it leads to litter on the farms and can compromise the quality of the finished compost. Outreach for the program has included letters to parents, feature on CPSD's blog [Chalkboard Chatter](#), banners and posters in the school, aprons for the student monitors, automated phone call to all King Open parents, meetings with staff, etc.

If other public schools want to participate, the Principal must first speak with the custodian, kitchen supervisors and lead teachers to gain buy-in. Then they should get in touch with Randi.

During the week of March 3rd, CLRS students are doing a 1 week composting pilot. Food scraps will be brought to the [Recycling Drop-off](#)

[Center](#) during open hours (Tues/Thurs 4pm-7:30pm and Sat 9am-4pm). It is likely that [High School Extension](#) will start composting in the fall.

Rob and Randi noted that decades years ago Cambridge residents took their food waste out to buried iron containers called "honey pots / buckets". They were covered with an attached lid that opened when stepped on. Some still exist in many Cambridge back yards. DPW emptied the food waste in a truck called the "honey wagon", which was dumped at Danehy Park, when it was a landfill. Area farmers brought their pigs to feed on the waste.

Overall, Randi is very pleased with the growth of the organics program and said that Cambridge is seen in MA as a leader in organics recycling initiatives.

MassDEP Report

DPW Commissioner Lisa Peterson will join the Committee at the March or April meeting to discuss the MassDEP report on strategies for increasing recycling and reducing waste.

RecycleCraze

Meryl talked about [RecycleCraze](#), a school-wide paper recycling competition in the Cambridge Public Schools. It runs for 12 weeks from February 2nd through May 8th. Schools must [report](#) their weekly recycling by fax, email, phone to get credit for their efforts. DPW will award the top two schools with the greatest paper tonnage/student, with City-wide publicity and a trophy.

Expanded Bottle Bill

With the FY10 budget, Governor Patrick [proposed](#) to expand the types of containers subject to the \$0.05 deposit to include those

containing water, flavored waters, coffee based drinks, juices and sports drinks of less than 1 gallon in size. In FY03, Governor Romney eliminated the Clean Environment Fund. The CEF's legislated purpose was to support recycling, composting and waste reduction programs through unredeemed bottle deposits involving no tax dollars. Communities were dependent on grant money funded by the CEF through the Municipal Recycling Incentive Program since 1991 to meet the cost of implementing state waste ban regulations. Cambridge received \$90-\$100K/year, which paid for two staff positions and electronics recycling.

In the Governor's proposal, funds would be dedicated to MassDEP's recycling and solid waste management programs at \$5 million, a 46% increase in funding from fiscal year 2009. Additionally, \$10 million is provided for the MA Water and Sewer Rate Relief Fund, which allocates rate reductions to communities and residents served by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA).

Robert noted a need to reform the redemption infrastructure with better financial incentives for redeemers, possibly including MRFs to be classified as redemption sites with appropriate financial mechanisms.

Electronics Recycling Event for Residents

On Saturday, February 28th, Samsung sponsored an electronics recycling event at the National Guard Armory at 450 Concord Ave from 9am-2pm. The event was in partnership with the City and CRT Processing (based in Portsmouth NH). All consumer electronics were accepted and 276 households participated. We filled up 2 trailers for a total of 28,621 pounds in one day! This is nearly 10% of the volume that we collected last year.