

DRAFT
Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes
November 14, 2018, 8am – 9:30am
City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Ave, Council Chambers
Minutes taken by Quinten Steenhuis

Members Present: Debby Galef, Rob Gogan, Martha Henry, Susy Jones, Debby Knight, Janet Mosley, Laura Nichols, Michael Pappas, Anne Sherman, Meera Singh, Quinten Steenhuis, Matthew St. Onge, Mary Verhage, Kristen Watkins

Members absent: Ilana Bechick

Staff Present: Deb Albenberg, Mike Fitzgerald, Mike Orr

Housekeeping

October minutes were approved.

City Update

40 tons of food waste, as opposed to the usual 33 or so, were collected last week. Pumpkins may have been the reason.

Discussion

Results of survey of RAC members were presented. How can the RAC become more effective?

Mike: Some committees are more visible in the community. e.g., bike committee hands out bicycle lights and sponsors rides. Two roles: moving culture forward and advising city on community perspective.

Debby: Interacting with the public is valuable, e.g., on pedestrian committee, outreach includes annual committee walks and appearing before city boards.

Anne: original committee was an activist force, but mostly now DPW is leading the way and many of the core efforts have been achieved or don't require a nudge, just assistance. Hard for committee to offer as much input because DPW is fully resourced.

Rob: once curbside recycling arrived, it changed the committee and some original members dropped off, with major goal completed. There were originally two committees, with one focused on input from community and one from businesses and community stakeholders like universities.

Results of survey

Overall satisfaction. Could reflect a different idea of what the purpose of the committee is. Most members only have 1-2 hours/month to volunteer, some more, some less.

What are we actually trying to accomplish? How do we measure success? Are we representative enough of the community? Who is it that we need to engage?

One possible goal: How can we use the RAC to drive leading edge recycling/waste initiatives?

Janet: complementary role between RAC and DPW.

Quinten: how can we better define how to direct communication outward: both to the community/outreach and appearing at hearings to present an informed community perspective?

Martha: how do we reach/engage people who aren't already recycling/composting participants?

Rob: RAC has been at its best when rallying around concrete achievements. Most important goal for the future is setting a limit on trash amount and providing city bins to all residents.

Martha: not just about outreach, the committee itself should reflect more diverse perspectives and the people whom we most want to educate.

Debby: what about inviting participation from students?

Rob: another big behavior change came from the bag ban. Very successful and model for Boston, touches everyone without requiring much education.

Mike: the RAC's input really does shape city initiatives. Also drives the city of Boston and neighboring towns. Cambridge is a lab for leading edge waste reduction. Maybe Cambridge should focus on a singular goal, such as reducing food waste. Time to implement zero-waste master plan.

- Repair /reusing
- Sharing library
- Waste exchange such as Buy Nothing Facebook, Nextdoor
- Promote businesses doing innovative things, such as breweries donating spent grains for making bread.

Maybe we can also collaborate with other committees?

Idea: give away reusable water bottles. But: maybe we should do it with a water bottle drive, since many of us have more reusable water bottles than we can use, from conferences, tabling events, etc.

Martha: Mass DEP has a great twitter feed that highlights what cities all around MA do.

Brainstorming – what goals should we have?

Kristen: 1. Bring compost bins to events. 2. Policy memos

Meera: 1. More public recycling bins near every trash bin. 2. Educate about options.

Martha: Educate residents—get rid of it right.

Debby G: 1. Reusable bottle drive. 2. Promote Cambridge city water

Mary: 1. More public containers. 2. 3-chute buildings in zoning requirements. 3. Actually enforce our recycling ordinances.

Janet: 1. Promote business waste reduction.

Anne: 1. How can committee function better? Eliminate subcommittees? Add share backs that focus on one topic? Limit breakouts to actionable goals.

Rob: 1. Waste audits. 2. Water taste test (Cambridge vs. bottled). 3. Trash bin volume limit. 4. Tupperware drive 5. Bulk recovery – e.g., abandoned bikes

Michael: 1. Business recycling 2. Compost culture change

Matthew: 1. Reeducation about what is currently recyclable. 2. Reduce plastic film – it's the main thing left after organics rollout.

Susy: 1. Think ahead for participatory budgeting. 2. Bad example – how polystyrene ordinance rolled out. Better coordination with city council needed.

Quinten: get out in front of confusion around anaerobic digestion vs. composting. We should affirmatively highlight why AD is good when tabling, have information on website, etc.

Announcements

GSD on Quincy St: refuge from refuse exhibit currently ongoing.

Design Center has a climate change exhibit, on display in front of Harvard Science Center.

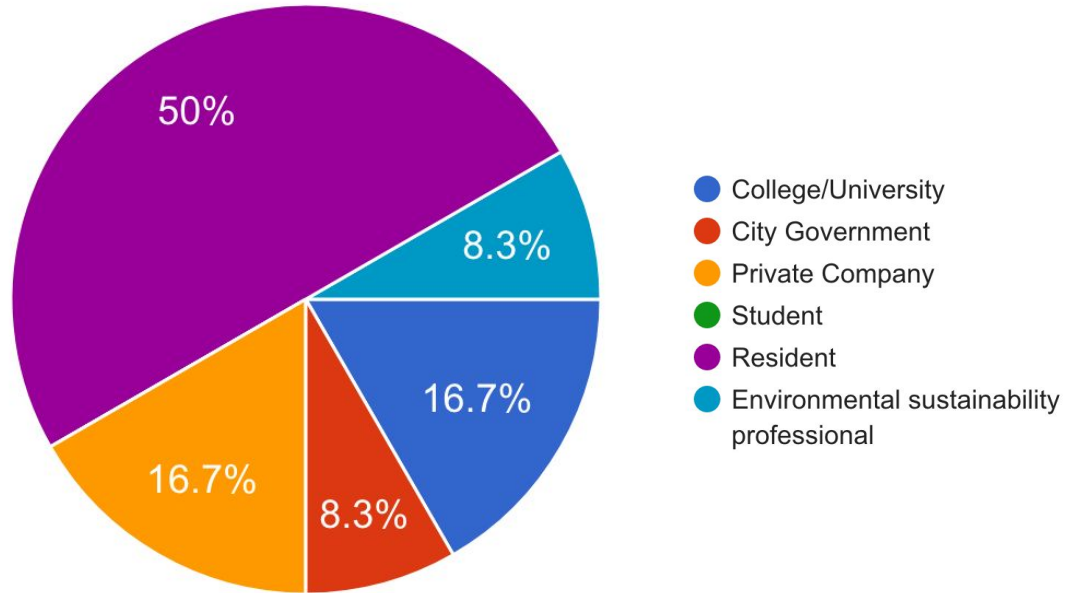
Meeting adjourned at 9:30.

Cambridge RAC Status Summary

November 14, 2018

Survey Results

RAC Stakeholder Groups

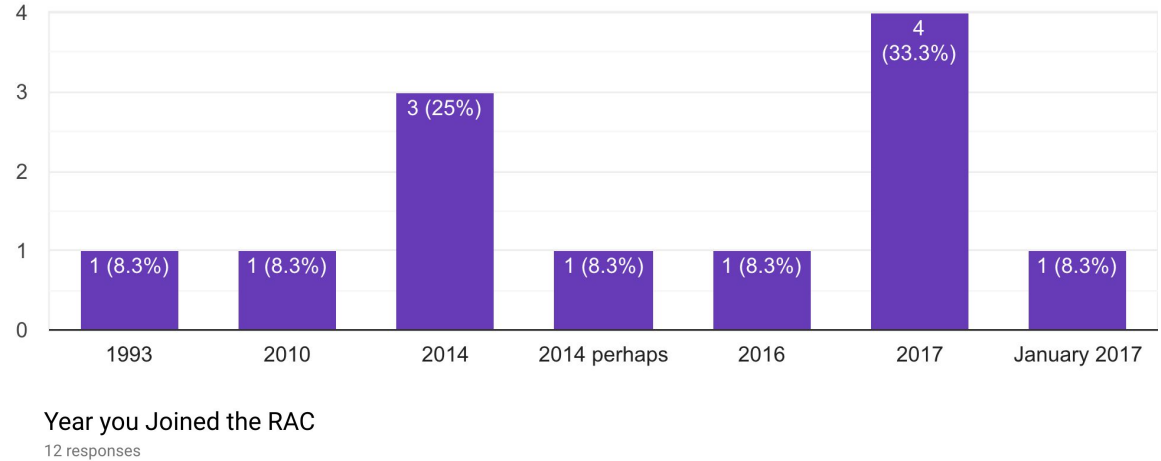


Which best described the stakeholder group you represent

12 responses

RAC Members represent a unique
cross-section of the Cambridge Community

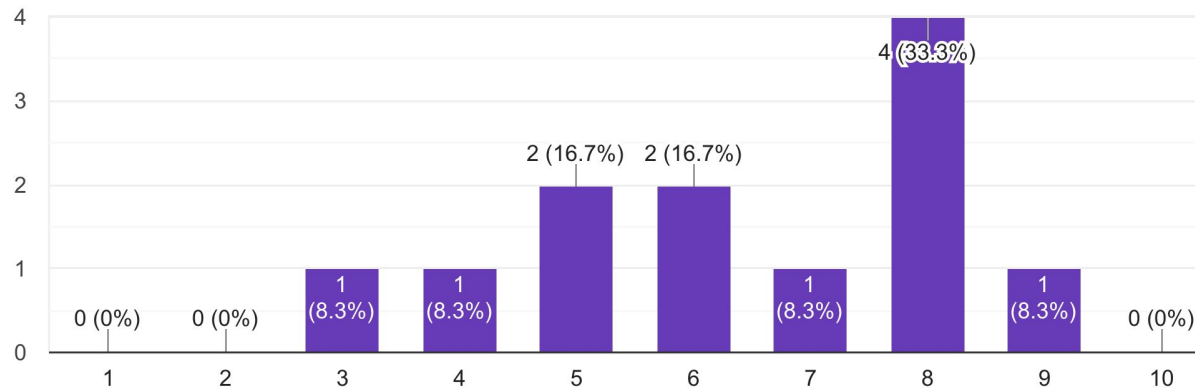
Diverse RAC Tenure



Great amount of ‘institutional knowledge’
across a variety of committee tenures.

Achieving RAC Goals

Lack of Consensus



On a scale of 1-10, how effective do you believe the RAC is in achieving our goals?

12 responses

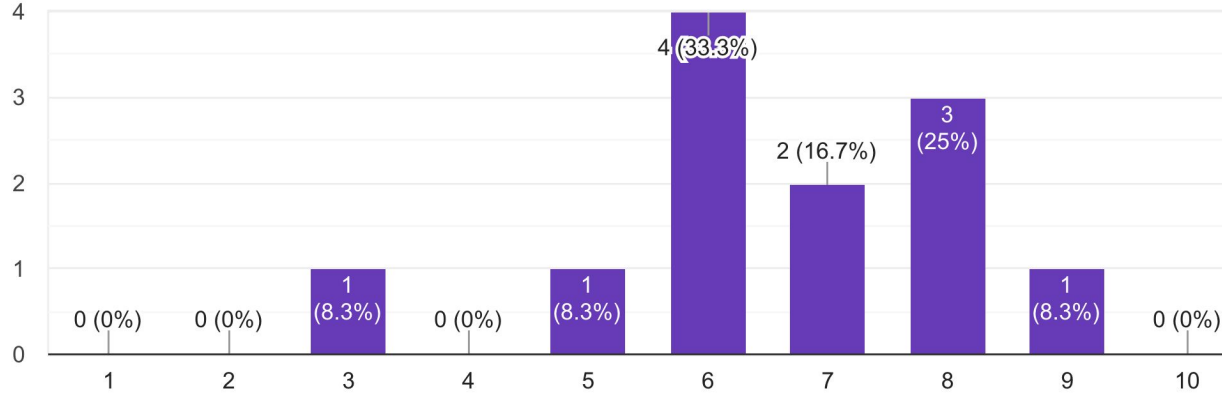
Lack of consensus around **effectiveness of committee?**

OR

Lack of consensus or understanding of **committee goals?**

Achieving Personal Goals

Mixed Response



On a scale of 1-10, how well have you achieved your personal goals as a RAC member?

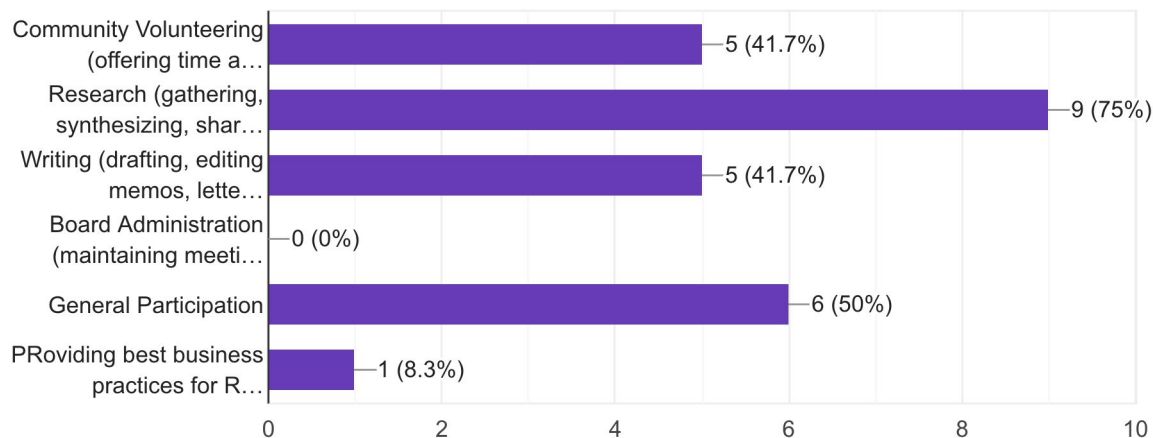
12 responses

Mixed Responses on personal goal achievement.

Needs Reflected in Survey:

- Better Information from DPW
- Improved Committee Structure
- More Time!

Interests in Committee Activity



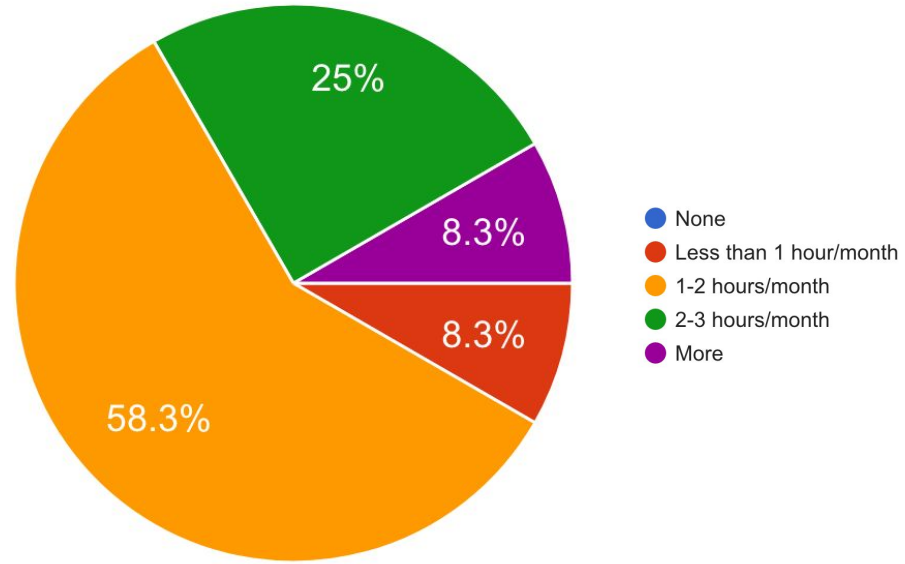
What activities are you most interested in pursuing as a RAC member?

12 responses

Highest Priorities:

1. Research
2. “General Participation” (*could be better defined*)
3. Tie: Community Volunteering & Writing

Availability Outside of Meetings



How much time are you able to commit to board activities outside of the scheduled meeting?

12 responses

Standard availability between 1-2 hours per month.

Recognition that this is a volunteer committee: schedules vary/life happens.

Overview

Diversity of Interest and Unification in Motivation

- Inspired by the group activities
- Group is representative of broad stakeholder groups
- Lots of opportunity to learn and educate
- Sense of fulfillment through service to the community

Successful Efforts

- Plastic Bag Ban: Research and Advocacy
- Curbside Composting Rollout
- Education Activities
- General volunteer opportunities
- Policy recommendations and support

Biggest risks

- Volunteer Committee: Limited Time/Availability outside of meetings
- Unclear Goals
- Unclear definition between RAC and DPW
- Lack of structure and accountability

Big Hairy Questions

What are We Trying to Accomplish?

- What problems are we trying to solve?
- Challenge to come to consensus among diverse interests.
- How do we define and measure success?
- What structure is best to support goals once we define them?

How do we best utilize the resources available through our members?

- What resources are available?
- How can they be combined and leveraged?
- Are we representing enough perspectives/Who is left out?

How do we translate tension between ‘top down’ vs. ‘bottom up’ directives into a mutual dialog?

Interest in supporting existing initiatives

+

Desire to drive further innovation

Opportunity

Translation: How Might We...?

...Utilize the networks and resources of the RAC and it's members to expand upon the existing activities of the City of Cambridge (& DPW) to unify stakeholders and drive leading edge waste and recycling initiatives in the City of Cambridge?