DRAFT

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes

April 10, 2019. 8am – 9:30am

City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Ave, Council Chambers

Minutes Taken by Meera Singh

**Members present**:

Debby Galef, Rob Gogan, Martha Henry, Susy Jones, Debby Knight, Janet Mosley,

Michael Pappas, Anne Sherman, Meera Singh, Matthew St. Onge, Quinten Steenhuis,

Mary Verhage, Kristen Watkins

**Members absent**:

Ilana Bebchick, Laura Nichols

**Staff**:

Meryl Brott, Camilla Elvis, Michael Orr

**Members of the public present**: Judy Nathans Helen Snively, Jena Gibson from Novartis

**Housekeeping**

* Minutes of the March 13 meeting were approved unanimously.
* No public comment.
* Anne Sherman reminded us that this is her last meeting at RAC as she relocates to Australia at the end of this month.
* Suzy and Kristen took over as co-chairs for the RAC.

**City Updates**

Mike announced that a notice to hire a Compliance Officer for the Solid Waste Division of DPW had been posted online this morning, the closing date of which is April 24, 2019.

Mike – The Health and Environment Committee of the City Council has invited the DPW (Recycling Director Mike Orr & Commissioner Owen O’Riordan) to their April 23 meeting. At this point Mike is not sure what the discussion topics will be but they may include city compost collection for 13+ unit buildings and commercial recycling. The City Council may have input on the ZWMP.

Questions to address:

how to serve buildings with over 50 units?

will the City pick up compost more than once a week?

will the City hire a contractor to do this service?

The curbside organics program has two trucks – currently about 600 buildings are not served – this is about 20,000 households. Can the City serve them with the labor force it has currently?

At this point no decision has been taken about whether buildings that do not have city trash collection will be served for curbside organics collection.

Rob – asked how the laborers who collect curbside organics feel about their job.

Mike – When the weather gets hot, that makes a difference. The employee priorities are to be safe and get their routes done on time. Mike ensures their job is getting done.

Temporary staff are hired for compost collection so 2 employees can do the pick up together. If they don’t have enough staff, then one does the pick up on his own.

The recycling truck is manned by only one employee.

**Discussion Items**

2019 Goals for the RAC

Suzy – Kristen, Suzy and Anne had an organizational meeting last week to identify priority areas.

Suzy and Kristen laid out a framework for a six-month strategic plan with 2-3 key objectives which they shared with the group to see if all were in agreement with their proposed plan.

The proposed high-level goals for 2019 are:

1. Promote a culture of reuse

Single use plastic and other products

City-wide yard sale

1. Support existing and new programs of Cambridge Recycling

Compost program

Business recycling

Regular volunteer participation by RAC members, and participation strategy for time-relevant activities such as participatory budgeting, university move out weeks

Janet – asked about the timeline to recruit new members. Current RAC members’ terms expire at the end of December 2019.

Mike - raised a question as to whether new members should be brought on in September.

Anne – asked if we might consider a different process to bring new members on.

Mike – depends on how many new members we would add. If new members join in September, they might have a more observatory role to start with.

Rob – congratulated Suzy and Kristen on incorporating long-term goals of the RAC into a strategic plan. He advocated for the promotion of Fixit Clinics as it aligns with the culture of reuse the RAC has prioritized.

Suzy – continued on the question of whether to bring new members on in September or January

What can we do to support FIXIT Clinics? How might RAC promote them?

Mike – more volunteers needed. How do we get people to habitually think of Fixit Clinics. The Cambridge Main Library is a big support and partner for this initiative. Mike would like to see it built up more. More coaches needed. The City gets money from the state if we hold 3 Fixit Clinics in one year. Advertising for the May Fixit Clinic is beginning soon.

Mathew – Does the state provide stipends for Fixit Clinic coaches? (No)

Rob – funds should be provided for parking for coaches and food and beverage. This is a good opportunity for City Council to demonstrate their support.

Suzy requested a debrief on how the Fixit Clinics are going, asked if it would be helpful to the City if the RAC were to spend more time discussing these.

Mike – suggested we debrief after the May Fixit clinic.

Rob announced that the next Fixit Clinic at Harvard is on April 22 at 1 Oxford St., Cambridge, at the Cabot Science Library.

Suzy – called to vote on the timing of bringing new members to the RAC.

Debby G. – does the City have a procedure/policy of when to bring on new members to the advisory committees?

Mike – new members can be brought in anytime but Mike prefers no more than once a year as it is a lot of work.

Rob – prefers adding new members in January, to keep the momentum of the RAC’s work going as training new members would distract from our tasks.

Anne – asked how big do we want the RAC to be? Suggested bringing on new members in September.

Janet – some overlap of new and departing members would be good.

Kristen – suggested Suzy and she work on a proposal of how we might have an overlap of new and departing members. Do a survey to find out who is planning to stay on the RAC.

Members voted on strategic plan laid out by Suzy and Kristen – all in favor to promote culture of

re-use in Cambridge.

**Sub-committee breakout groups**

Susy and Kristen presented this to the group:

Goals Discussion – April 2019

**RAC Priority Areas - Discussion & Exercise**

***Possible RAC Activities to discuss and review:***

* Single-use plastics/products
  + First, research what the biggest areas for impact are (what are the top single use plastics being and other single use products used in Cambridge? Data research/waste audits)
  + Then, develop proposed strategies for City on top items - could involve policy/advocacy with City Council or DPW, outreach events, etc., and write memo to Owen and Mike.
* Compost
  + Outreach support at events (flagged by Mike) and with new larger buildings; i.e. set a goal for participation for each RAC member?
  + Continue providing feedback on communications materials
* City-wide yard sale
  + Develop a proposal for how to implement for DPW to use in planning city-wide yard sale next year
    - Q for Mike - does this seem helpful?
* Business recycling
  + Develop recommendations for next steps following pilot
  + Advise on business strategy, help think about reuse options with businesses
  + Other ideas from Mike and group?

***Groups discussed the following questions***

1. How will the RAC approach supporting DPW in this area (starting from our initial ideas)?
2. What timeline makes sense to complete this work? We don’t necessarily need to tackle all of these at once! So think strategically about timeframe.
3. What is a KPI/metric we can use to know if we were successful? Do we need more data?

Come back together to discuss/share out (~10 min); next meeting in May we’ll have a calendar for review of how we might tackle all of these exciting plans, likely starting in the Fall!

Kristen + Susy - think about staging these activities using the following format:

* Topic-based is good
* A bit of a mix between small and big group
* Conference calls - drill down into details
* Work on some bigger programs together
* Accountability - who is the champion for each of these
* Rob - getting data - what are the single use products that bug you, public health concerns ie using reusables at whole foods

***Notes from group discussions:***

**Business Recycling**

What is the application process - criteria for applying and being selected?

When will the pilot end? When will the funding end? Is there ongoing funding for this?

How are the businesses engaging?

Interview businesses to find out what we could do to motivate them to participate.

Recommend –

Recognition program for the small businesses that fared well in the pilot program.

Mentorship program for participating businesses to provide support and encouragement..

Action points:

1. Find out what the existing program entails
2. What are the KPIs for the existing program
3. How can we engage businesses to share perspectives/leverage their knowledge to support other businesses?
4. Outreach to businesses
5. Proposals with program recommendations – e.g. Recognition Program.
6. Timeline – 1st phase (shorter) – get data and statistics to determine interest and viability for future RAC engagement. 2nd phase (after a couple of months) put forth recommendations.

**City-wide Yard Sale**

Laura Nichols, who was not present at the meeting, is interested in this program.

Discussion is needed on who will own this effort. What will DPW’s role be? What can the RAC do to reduce the burden on the city of organizing a CWYS?

Research what other cities have done in this area.

Need for an exploratory committee to hash out these details and bring back to the RAC.

Maybe this initiative would only come to fruition next summer.

**Composting**

Vision – to make it routine among all residents, not something extraordinary.

Provide compost bags at tabling events.

Explain anaerobic digestion to public while tabling – demystify to counter last year’s WBUR story.

Create special educational campaigns to tackle common related problems, such as how to handle fruit flies in warm months.

Promote food waste reduction.

**Single Use Plastics/Products**

Conduct a waste audit.

Research – trends in single use plastic reduction, what policies are in place for restaurants & businesses?

Rob request – need lots of data so let us know: what are the single use plastics that annoy you, what issues do you face, what do you see at street level?

Kristen – asked for feedback on the structure of small group breakouts

Quinton – prefers this topic-based discussion

Janet – likes a mix – recalls having conference calls for the sub-committee meetings in the past, but also thinks it helps to work on the bigger programs together

Anne – accountability issue – who will be the champion to take each action item forward?

**Action Items**

Suzy & Kristen – timeline for RAC action for the next six months

**Other/Announcements**

Mike

1. asked members to sign up to volunteer at upcoming events
2. sign up to take minutes for the rest of the year
3. ZWMP presented to the City Council on April 23, 3:00 to 5:00 PM

Debby K. – announcement about textile recycling event on April 13 at PEM

Rob – Simple Recycling pink bags for textiles are being used at Harvard

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM.