DRAFT

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes

June 12, 2019, 8am – 9:30am

City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Ave, Council Chambers

Minutes taken by Kristen Watkins

**Members Present:** Ilana Bebchick, Debby Galef, Rob Gogan, Martha Henry, Susy Jones, Debby Knight, Meera Singh, Matthew St. Onge, Quinten Steenhuis, Mary Verhage, Kristen Watkins

**Members Absent:** Janet Mosley, Laura Nichols, Michael Papas

**Staff Present**: Deb Albenberg, Meryl Brott, Camilla Elvis, Michael Orr

**Members of the Public Present**: Judy Nathans, Helen Snively

1. Housekeeping
   * Minutes of the May meeting were approved.
   * Public comment
     + Judy attended city council health and environment committee meeting and recommend that we read the minutes. Be careful in looking at the ordinances we’re considering copying – Berkeley takes food waste and yard waste together, Brookline doesn’t compost. Concerns around toxicity may have driven some of the development of their ordinances.
       - Mike to send notes to RAC
2. Single Use Plastics Task Force
   * RAC’s role in this is formalized in the policy order from the city council
   * First step is data collection before reviewing other cities’ ordinances
     + What is the world of single use plastics that can be targeted?
   * Scope
     + Single use plastics given out by businesses, packaging, etc.
     + Not in scope – how products are coming into businesses (i.e. how packaged products are packaged)
     + Should be something the city can enforce
   * Next, researching how different cities came to their ordinances: not just what they are but how they arrived at that
   * Are there preferred types of plastic?
   * Rob did some tracking on Mass Ave - #1 commodity he found on the ground was coffee cups
     + Average of about 25 cigarette butts per block, 250 in the Cambridge Common just along the sidewalk; filters include plastic
     + In the barrels, most common items were Dunkin and Starbucks cups and straws, also cutlery
     + McDonalds is going to paper straws nationwide
     + Plastic cups also have residue – ice, food, etc. that contaminate recycling and could be composted
   * Retailers – ideally we would survey them and include them in this process at some point to help understand impact of any potential ordinance
   * Can part of our role be informing businesses about what is actually recyclable?  Mary will send out WSJ article that talks about changes businesses are making in name of environmentalism. Would be great to include both what you can and can’t use
   * There needs to be a substitute for anything the city is banning
   * Can we use incentives to change behaviors, such as charging for cups?
   * Challenges of Cambridge population: lots of people coming through, transient student population
   * Can we invite some businesses who produce a lot of the single use plastics to discuss what they use, what might work in future, etc.?
     + Before this, consider doing an audit of public bins to present at the meeting
   * How to encourage reuse culture at businesses as well as with consumers
     + What are the roadblocks?
   * Feedback from Mike – we should be spending just as much time with the small businesses as the big chains to make sure we’re accommodating small business needs too
   * Incompatibility of too much paper for our compost system, which is different from the west coast
   * Canada has announced a ban on single use plastic, and EU has already adopted a ban that is motivated by marine plastics (so includes things like fishing nets)
   * Next Steps/Plan:
     + September meeting – focused on discussion with businesses and city’s economic development department folks
       - For reaching businesses, maybe Cambridge Local First is a good starting place, along with Sustainable Network, KSA, CSBA, etc.
       - Mike to send a doodle to schedule first meeting
     + Summer meeting Wednesday, August 14th
3. RAC for 2020
   * Membership
     + Would be great to have members from retail/restaurants
     + Property management community would be helpful too
     + Schools could be better represented
     + We should make clear the time commitment we’re asking for beyond the meetings – volunteer events, work outside of meetings, etc.
       - Can we also clarify how to be involved even if not a formal member of the committee (e.g. can volunteer, show up for committees, etc.)
4. Participatory Budgeting
   * Brainstorm what might be beneficial and aligned with RAC goals that Cambridge residents can consider submitting
   * Participatory budgeting items need to be capital projects
   * Submission dates are June 1st – July 31st
   * Ideas from the committee
     + Little free libraries or book sharing (bookshelf at the recycling center is highly utilized but only open a few hours)
     + Gifts that are reusables that require some level of commitment
     + Little free water bottle libraries in the business districts/public schools
     + Fix it tools to live at the library (like what’s currently in JP)
5. Misc
   * Riverfest went really well
     + 14 stations with compost as well as trash and recycling
     + Had several RAC volunteers which was great!
     + Collected less compost than expected, about 700 pounds
   * Fix It Clinic in May went well, ~40 items, new coaches were recruited, good turnout and lessons learned on how to keep the line moving
     + About 30 bikes fixed
   * Mattress recycling is going well, getting lots of requests
   * May saw big uptick and highest month outside of Nov in compost
   * Textile recycling by city still being considered
   * Announcements
     + Harvard stuff sale at 1 Oxford St – June 22nd and 23rd for small things; big one last week of August
     + Volunteer events – Hoops 'N Health in Cambridgeport and Fresh Pond Day happening at the exact same time, June 15; several RAC volunteers but could use more;
       - Next will be city dance party the last Friday of June (going around with clipboard with one question quiz to teach people about recycling and collect emails)
     + Idea from Mary
       - One year plan for communications that will address all three recycling streams. Large coordinated outreach plan is needed