DRAFT

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes

March 13, 2019, 8am – 9:30am

City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Ave, Council Chambers

Minutes taken by Janet Mosley

**Members Present:** Debby Galef, Rob Gogan, Susy Jones, Janet Mosley, Michael Papas, Anne Sherman, Meera Singh, Matthew St. Onge, Quinten Steenhuis, Kristen Watkins

**Members Absent**: Ilana Bebchick, Debby Knight, Laura Nichols, Mary Verhage

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

**Members of the Public Present**: Helen Snively

**Housekeeping Items:**

* Minutes of February 13, 2019 meeting passed unanimously.
* An unnamed member of the public made a comment about extended producer responsibility.

**City Updates**

* Mike announced that the mattress recycling program is scheduled to begin April 4th. The city will be partnering with UTEC, which will be collecting and recycling the mattresses. Free mattress pick-up can be scheduled through an online platform. UTEC is planning to do pickups one day a week, but may do more during peak move in/move out months. Outreach on the new program – press release, website update, email newsletter to residents and multi-family property owners, etc - will begin once the contract with UTEC has been signed.

**Leadership Roles**

* Kristen Watkins and Susy Jones volunteered to be co-chairs for the RAC. The RAC voted unanimously to approve both Kristen and Susy as co-chairs.

**Discussion of Zero Waste Master Plan Comments**

* Debby G: It can be confusing to switch back and forth between discussing waste quantities on a weight basis (lbs/household/week) and a volume basis (gallons/household/week).
* Rob: It is important that we follow up on the recommendation to develop a schedule for regular waste audits so that the city stays informed on trends in quantities of materials that are recycled, composted, and put in the trash.
* Rob: It would be good if HDR could clarify how they arrived at the value of 60% of trash is divertible. HDR should be more explicit on how that will be measured and monitored.
* Quinten: The ZWMP does not seem to contain a strategy for meeting the 2050 waste reduction goal. Waste reduction shown in Figure 10-1 appears to level out between 2020 and 2030.
  + Mike: This report is focused most on the next 5 years and the materials that can be diverted using the current programs. The plan is to update the ZWMP regularly, so the strategy to meet the 2050 goals will develop over time. It will be important to get a better understanding of people’s habits and the material composition of the waste stream in 2050.
* Kristen: While reading through the ZWMP report, I realized that this does not address the waste from the whole city. It would be good if the report clearly stated that the ZWMP is focused on residential waste. Perhaps another study could be done to focus on commercial and institutional waste.
  + Mike: Good point. We may be able to look at that with the help of consultants in future reports. However, this shows general trends in waste reduction efforts in the city.
* Susy: It seems like we should add a metric addressing contamination (of recycling and compost) in all audits going forward.
* Susy: Are there any ongoing efforts by Cambridge or other cities to address all waste (across all sectors)?
  + Mike: Boston may have looked at this, but may have used San Francisco’s model. Zero waste planning across all sectors is very complex and would require a separate study.
* Anne noted that there was a small section in the current report on the new curbside recycling program for some small businesses, but business recycling is not addressed outside of that, and is not shown in Figure 10-1.
  + Mike: Historically, business waste and recycling has been outside the scope of city operations, which have only focused on the residential waste stream. The small business curbside recycling program that just started covers only 125-135 businesses out of 6,000 plus businesses in Cambridge, so it has a very small impact.
* Quinten (and others): Based on Figures 5-1 and 5-2, why are trash quantities so much higher for the Thursday route than for other routes?
  + Mike: This route is through East Cambridge. It is not entirely clear why this area has lower diversion rates. However, there is money remaining from the compost door-to-door campaign, so Geovision will be doing additional door-to-door outreach in East Cambridge soon to try to increase participation in curbside composting.
* Debby G.: It would be good if HDR clarified within the main report that the curbside audit results in Figures 5-1 and 5-2 are based on a sample size of 50-60 set outs.
* Rob: Why does HDR recommend using actual pictures of products in outreach materials as opposed to icons?
  + Mike: The city has chosen to use icons so that the graphics will match those chosen for the organics outreach materials.
* Anne: It seems the key recommendation for trash disincentives is to move forward with a city-provided standardized trash bin. What is the City’s thinking about some of the other ideas provided.
  + Mike: The thing we are thinking about is how to deal with trash overflow. Especially in weeks around move-in and move-out (May/June and Aug/Sept).
* Rob: The idea of a double up day or a grace period seems like a good way to deal with overflow around moving times and holidays.
* Martha: Why does implementing a standardized bin result in such a large decrease in GHG emissions?
  + Mike: HDR found it difficult to estimate GHG emissions reductions due to use of a standard sized trash can. They had to use certain assumptions, such as increased composting and recycling.
* Anne: What are the City’s thoughts on a potential textile recycling program?
  + Mike: There could be a big outreach campaign to get people to use the textile recycling resources currently available, or it is possible that Cambridge could add a curbside collection program in a few years. Simple Recycling provides a program at no cost to the community that is being used in many surrounding communities.
  + Anne: Perhaps there should be textile recycling collection at Fix-It-Clinics.
* Anne: A lot of Dunkin Donuts trash is found within several blocks of a local Dunkin Donuts. Businesses are not being held accountable for the trash they produce. The city is subsidizing their business by picking up the trash in public bins and street sweeping. What are other cities doing?
  + Matthew: Junk mail is similarly frustrating – the magazines and flyers keep being delivered even after unsubscribing.
  + Mike: It might be more appropriate to work with city council to deal with the issue of single-use items. However, it is important to consider whether this is a business issue or a consumer habits issue. Flour sells coffee for $1.50/cup for customers with a reusable mug. These businesses should be promoted for their efforts to change the culture.
  + Rob: Businesses should be made to charge extra for single use containers. This was an effective measure in the plastic bag ban ordinance.
  + Anne: But people can become desensitized to small extra charges, such as the bottle refund deposit, and then they are no longer effective. Perhaps better to tax the businesses.
    - Janet: Don’t forget that the city does tax businesses, it’s just about how those dollars are allocated
      * Yes, but it is about signaling to the businesses the cost of the waste they produce.
* Quinten: The weight of single use coffee cups is low. Let’s not lose sight of the highest priorities such as increasing composting.
  + Rob: Remaining liquid and ice in cups or food in take-out containers can actually add a lot of weight, so often it is not insignificant. Plus the cost of maintaining public bins is high.
* Susy: The report is lacking a section on emerging trends in other locations that Cambridge could consider. Should the RAC sink our teeth into the areas HDR has identified as important, or should we act as a type of think tank to identify new ideas for waste reduction in Cambridge?
* Kristen: Locations in Europe and some U.S. cities such as San Francisco are now acknowledging that they’ll never get 100% compliance with waste diversion, so they are now starting to process trash. The HDR report implies that is not an option Cambridge is considering, but perhaps that could be an option to look at in the future in order to reach the 2050 goal.
* Janet: It doesn’t seem like recycling and composting containers are consistently available in municipal buildings. Of course, this is not a large percentage of the waste stream, but having composting in municipal buildings could be somewhat like public recycling bins – possibly not a lot of volume and possibly contaminated, but it sends the right message to residents.
  + Mike: Composting and recycling are available in schools and the senior center – the big producers of waste among municipal buildings.
* Anne: In Figure 10-1, HDR should clarify if the drop in trash disposal indicated on the graph is associated with the policy before or after decline in waste.
* Matthew: Will the city continue its recycling program even if the cost of recycling rises above the cost of trash?
  + Mike: Yes, recycling is required by law.
* Kristen: HDR should make sure that the waste reduction modeling assumptions are documented either in the main document or within an appendix.

**Discussion of New Recycling Flyers**

* Some members suggested that the icons should be bigger
* Quinten suggested that a hanger icon could be better to represent tanglers than electronics cords.
* Debby G.: Are milk and juice cartons recyclable or not? They should be addressed in the flyer.
  + Mike: Cartons are not currently recyclable, but are a small part of the waste stream and not currently a major issue for contamination, so the decision was made to keep the focus on the key items to keep out of recycling bins such as plastic bags.

**Discussion of Other 2019 Goals**

Tabled until the April 2019 meeting.

**Action Items**

* Members should add any remaining comments on the Zero Waste Master Plan to the GoogleDoc or send them to Mike.
* Please send additional comments on the new recycling flyer to Mike.

**Announcements**

* The RAC/CPAC mixer is scheduled for 5:30pm on March 20th.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 am.