DRAFT Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes

October 15, 2019 8 am - 9:30 am

City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Council Chambers

Minutes taken by Quinten Steenhuis

**Members Present**: Debby Galef, Rob Gogan, Martha Henry, Susy Jones, Debby Knight, Laura Nichols, Michael Papas, Quinten Steenhuis, Mattew St Onge, Mary Verhage, Kristen Watkins

**Members Absent**: Ilana Bebchick, Meera Singh

**Staff Present**: Deb Albenberg, Mike Orr

**Members of the Public Present**: Katharine Davis, Hanna German, Judy Nathans, Richard Nurse, Colombe Saint Pere, Helen Snively, Sakiko Somichi

Housekeeping  
Minutes of the September meeting were approved with no changes.

**Discussion / work on Single Use Plastics ordinance. Group Exercise** (see attachment below for more info on this exercise)

RAC split into three groups to review and discuss existing ordinances in three California cities: Palo Alto, San Francisco, and Berkeley.

Discussed three topics: main goals of each city's policy, what works about the policy and might be helpful for Cambridge, and what is missing that we might want to add.

Common drivers:

* Marine health (3)
* reducing litter generally (2)
* waste reduction (2)
* reducing use of PFOA/PFAS chlorinated chemicals for human health and soil health (2)

What works:

* Opt-in for unneeded plastic accessories (such as stirrers, straws, napkins) even if not plastic. Ban plastic options except for reasonable accommodation for disabilities.
* Incremental roll-out (although SF gave only 5 month phase-in—preferred longer phase-in such as in Palo Alto or Berkeley)
* Tiers of regulation for different products
* Not focusing on or suggesting a change to compostable plastics, which won't work well (it likely won’t be composted) in Cambridge
* Charge for disposable coffee cups
* Not sure: would it work in Cambridge to follow example of requiring all eat-in restaurants to have dishwashers as done in Palo Alto?
* Also unsure: Palo Alto’s take-out containers are required to be reusable by 2025. May be difficult to make this work in Cambridge.

What's missing:

* Business assistance (this will be done if or after an ordinance is passed by City Council)
* Produce bags in supermarkets
* Communication requirements for businesses
* Handling food delivery waste (although addressed by Palo Alto, Cambridge may need a different approach).

**City Updates**

* Compost expansion has been a success. 650 new units (in buildings of 13+ units) have been added to the program just in the last month.
* Cambridge's recycling contamination rate is excellent, having declined to 5.9% following recent education efforts. Trash is also down 4.3%. Could be due to start of mattress collection. Impressive that more non-recyclables are in the trash, but trash is still down.
* Zero Waste Master Plan is now live. Cambridge is set to meet our 2020 waste reduction goal by the end of 2019!
* Joint meeting with CPAC proposed for December or January. Consumption based green house gas emissions to be discussed.

**Public comment**:

* Sakiko, a student at Harvard Divinity School, commented that we should make sure to follow-up on our policy work to ensure it is successful. Remember that our climate is different from the West Coast which affects options for reusable/compostable materials.
* We may need to replace the labels on recycling bins as they get worn out over time, making it harder for residents to know what is recyclable.

**Announcements**:

* Those interested should reapply for the RAC by November 15th.
* Fix-it clinics coming up: October 26th at Central Square Library, November 12th on Harvard campus at 1 Oxford St., Cabot Science Library.
* Rob Gogan is receiving recognition tonight from MassRecycle.
* Monday October 21st: digital right to repair bill has a hearing on Beacon Hill.

Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee

October 16, 2019

Group Exercise - 50 Minutes

**Purpose:** Review and reflect on the single-use policies of our peer cities, in order to determine: a.) what the driver for a City of Cambridge policy could be, and b.) what key policy aspects might we want to integrate into a recommendation letter to DPW?

**Instructions:**

Split into 3 small groups (Palo Alto, Berkeley, & San Francisco). Take **5 minutes on your own** to read your city’s policy summary sheet. Then, take **20 minutes to discuss the questions below with your group.** We will reconvene as a large group for the remaining 20 minutes of the session to discuss.

**Small Group Discussion Questions:**

1. What is the main driver/s of this policy? (i.e. marine health, ghg emissions, human health)
2. Which aspects of this ordinance might work best from Cambridge?
3. Is there anything missing from this ordinance that might be relevant to Cambridge?

**RAC Discussion Notes (large group):**

***Drivers:***

The RAC felt strongly that the following drivers help shape any future ordinance:

* Marine health
* Waste reduction that tracks to zero waste goal
* Public litter reduction
* Soil and human health
* Greenhouse gas reduction/climate action
* Ecosystem health

***Policy Elements***

The RAC identified the following policy elements to explore for a future ordinance:

* Plastic accessories upon request
  + i.e. “Accessory Disposable Foodware Items shall be provided only upon request” (Berkeley)
* A single-use cup fee (i.e. $.25) - “bring your own cup”
  + i.e. “Prepared Food Vendors must show a charge of twenty-five cents ($0.25) for every disposable cup provided.”  (Berkeley)
* Technical assistance grants for small businesses
  + i.e.  “Technical assistance and mini-grants will be available to assist food vendors with the transition prior to enforcement.” (Berkeley)
* Accessible, inclusive, comprehensive communications materials
* Compostable produce bags requirements/ban on plastic produce bags

Additional elements identified include:

* Having tiers - banning the most problematic items first (i.e. plastic straws and stirrers)
* Less of a focus on replacing with compostable items (as in other ordinances)
* A new construction requirement (i.e. Palo Alto)
  + All new construction and tenant improvements to food service establishments required to install a dishwasher.
* Like the idea of a “dine in” reusable requirement but would need to understand better what businesses this would impact