

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes
August 12, 2020, 9:15 am - 11 am
Virtual Meeting
Minute Taker: Debby Galef

Members Present: Ilana Beichick, Catrina Damrell, Shirley Elliot, Debby Galef, Rob Gogan, Martha Henry, Sakiko Isomichi, Susy Jones, Debby Knight, Scott MacGrath, Janet Mosley, Audrey Ng, Richard Nurse, Meera Singh, Quinten Steenhuis, Mary Verhage

Members Absent: Leah Beckett, Holden Cookson, Lindsay Levine, Laura Nichols, Diane Roseman, Kristen Watkins, Suzanne Wong

Staff Present: Deb Albenberg, Dawit Gelaye, Mike Orr

Public Present: Judy Nathans, Helen Snively

1. Housekeeping

March meeting minutes approved.

Virtual meeting protocols and procedures were discussed.

It was agreed that future meetings would revert to the usual 8 am meeting time.

2. City Updates

The suspension of curbside compost collection was due to distancing rules and the need for a minimum of 2 people on the trucks. The City is hoping for resumption in September, after the City can negotiate a system for employees to safely manage both trash and compost collection. In the meantime, drop off options have been expanded. Unfortunately a lot of momentum has been lost so a public campaign was suggested upon resumption.

Will the city be subsidizing backyard composters again? Not now. Folks may try purchasing discount composters from Boston Building Resources.

Brief discussion of EPA study comparing incineration, landfill, composting and anaerobic digestion. Project was produced by Janet's former colleagues.

As of 8/10, the BYOB ordinance is once again in effect.

Starting 11/1, Save That Stuff will take over from Russell as the city's residential recycling and yard waste (now extended to 12/31) hauler. Russell had gotten to know the ins and outs of Cambridge routes and it may take some time for STS to become thoroughly acquainted with them, although the company is not new to the city. They are already collecting commercial recycling, and picking up drop off compost

and recycling from public area bins. Those wanting to thank Russell drivers are encouraged to do so; for example giving them bottled water on a hot day.

Small business recycling will be expanding to an extra 125 businesses, close to 250 in all.

How can we encourage more yard waste collection so less goes into waterways and landfills? More outreach?

Next Household Hazardous Waste collection will take place on 8/22 at a new location provided by MIT: 65 Waverly St. More accessible than Mooney St., which is at the edge of the city.

The Recycling Center will remain open solely on Saturdays. 2 - 3 workers are necessary and there hasn't been much demand for resuming the other days and hours. But, notify Mike if you are interested in helping make it open on Tuesdays and Thursdays again.

Subcommittee Reports

Reuse committee (Leah and Meera) created a list of businesses that do repairs. City is not able to disseminate such a list but it has been submitted to Green Cambridge and Find It Cambridge among other locations. Other suggestions welcome.

Lee (Shirley) has written 3 food-related newsletters highlighting what may be done with food that otherwise might go to waste (such as watermelon rinds). Complete with recipes. Seasonal food will be featured and its history and nutritional info is included.

Analytics (Sakiko) is working on surveys to figure out what residents know and how they learn it.

Compost (Suzanne) has published 2 articles regarding reducing food waste in Cambridge Day, with recipes.

Janet provided a brief summary of the Joint RAC/CPAC committee. The Committee is studying the social and economic benefits of reducing consumption-based greenhouse gas emissions. Trying to amplify city's efforts at food waste reduction, which ultimately is more important than composting. Several years ago CRLS kids did a great project on this subject.

Next Steps for RAC

2019 goal was promoting a culture of reuse. 2020 goals may be different, given changed circumstances. Fear that pandemic has blown away culture of reuse. Virtual fix-it clinics are thriving though.

Some residents are very uninformed. We need avenues for getting out information.

DPW's Newsletter should have permanent waste reduction section.

Could we work with grocery stores to promote food waste reduction on their websites? Maybe farmers markets and CSAs?

Could we explore and promote AD (anaerobic digestion)?

Elections for co-chairs and secretary will take place at September meeting. Mike to send out descriptions of positions. Contact him if you want to nominate yourself or someone else.

Action items

Susy to send out MIT study re safety vs. sustainability.

Mary will send link to daily city newsletter.

How can we pay attention to/reward DPW front line workers?

If any RAC members are interested in volunteering to staff Recycling Center on Tuesdays or Thursdays, let Mike know.

Further sharing of repair list.