

DRAFT
Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes
October 14, 2020, 8 am – 9:30 am
Virtual Meeting Minute Taker: Meera Singh

Members present: Leah Beckett, Holden Cookson, Catrina Damrell, Shirley Elliot, Debby Galef, Rob Gogan, Martha Henry, Sakiko Isomichi, Susy Jones, Debby Knight, Lindsey Levine, Scott MacGrath, Janet Mosley, Laura Nichols, Richard Nurse, Diane Roseman, Meera Singh, Quinten Steenhuis, Mary Verhage, Kristen Watkins, Suzanne Wong

Members absent: Ilana Bebchick, Audrey Ng

Staff Present: Bronwyn Cooke, Mike Orr

Public present: Helen Snively

1. Housekeeping

- Minutes of the September 10 meeting were approved.
- Susy introduced Scott MacGrath as co-chair of RAC.

2. City Updates & discussion on RAC/CPAC sub-committee findings

Mike - no city updates; new hauler for recycling and yard waste starts November 2

Bronwyn Cooke was present to answer questions members had on the Summary of Brainstormed Actions document created by the RAC/CPAC Sub-committee on Consumption Emissions. She noted that not all the actions included would be early action items – e.g. Low Carbon Production, switch to foods produced using less GHG intensive methods. The slide presentation shared with RAC explains what the sub-committee thought should be pursued as priorities.

Rob said in order to manage our waste the City needs to manage its procurement, understand the impact of what we consume daily (scope 3 emissions).

It was agreed that RAC would get updates on the RAC/CPAC sub-committee as a standing item every other month at our meeting.

Susy's three comments on the summary doc:

- i) Sustainability, affordability and access need to be talked about together vis-à-vis low carbon diets – not make them mutually independent
- ii) The final document should be culturally relevant and inclusive
- iii) How do we define "local"? Susy suggested it should be the New England states. She referred to New England Food Vision, a regional network. What are the strengths different states in the region provide in terms of access to healthy food?

Scott asked if the sub-committee had looked into modeling after other towns that have worked on similar objectives.

Bronwyn said that there are some case studies and that Washington D.C., Oregon and some other states are doing similar work, and that the sub-committee is tackling an emissions goal to begin with. C40 cities have a Good Foods campaign developed around low carbon diets. https://www.c40.org/press_releases/good-food-cities. This gives tools for people to make choices based on the messages of the campaign rather than recommending specific food products.

Debby Knight mentioned that low carbon diets in the 1970s took resources into account and also shared that the EPA, FDA & USDA have a joint paper presenting a strategy on reducing food waste.

Sakiko asked how much of the target was businesses in Cambridge.

Bronwyn said that residents were the obvious stakeholder but also large institutional food providers like MIT and Harvard. Smaller food providers like restaurants would be trickier to tackle. Bronwyn said she would be reaching out to the City's Economic Development Team to share the sub-committee's objectives to discuss prudent ways to approach restaurants.

Mike felt the efforts should be geared to residents and their choices.

Suzanne's point on barriers to access and questions: the ability to access healthy food is a class issue. The only mention in the document is subsidizing vegetable alternatives and taxing meat and dairy items. Are there any efforts to address households who don't have the time to prepare meals as they might be working multiple jobs? Are there efforts on educating people, or making vegetables cheaper?

Bronwyn said they are planning to approach the City's Health Department to get their perspective on healthy foods and will also share the sub-committee's goals and objectives with the Economic Development and Health Departments to ask how they could approach this in a way that benefits their goals, too. Bronwyn emphasized that they are thinking of various perspectives, not just the emissions.

Susy suggested other partners in food justice could be explored later.

Rob felt RAC can make a unique contribution vis-à-vis food consumption through waste audits to monitor residents' actual consumption. How much do they waste? Start bench-marking by making quantitative assessments based on meat food packaging – create a tracking measure.

3. RAC sub-committees discussion

Results of RAC members' preference of sub-committee –

Mike said there were a good amount for Analytics and Food Waste Reduction and fewer for Reuse & Repair.

Mike's question to RAC - How do we want to push these agendas? How do members want to approach their participation?

More education outreach, a more programmatic approach, specific projects?

Meera – concern that a large number of residents do not read the newsletter with the recycling information and wishes we could think of ways to increase more direct outreach in this pandemic time.

Kristen said we need to incorporate the current Covid-19 situation as we think about our approach.

Susy asked how this could feed into the Analytics sub-committee.

Mike – there has been an increase in trash and recycling as a result of people working from home but that the issues we are tackling are universal and not time bound. They are relevant pre and post Covid.

Debby K. – people are home so cleaning out stuff and getting rid of more stuff.

Kristen – items are not being donated because there are no drop off locations due to Covid.

Susy asked if we could compile a list of places in the City that are accepting donations. Helen was greatly in favor of this as well.

Shirley has discussed more personal outreach with Deb A.

Sakiko – take into consideration Covid – think of how to reach out to people of different classes, cultures, ages. Her survey would be useful for this.

Mary suggested that the RAC sub-committees should start meeting and set measurable objectives for how to meet the sub-committees' goals, and put together plans on how to reach those goals.

Rob – seen major victories over the 25 years he has been on RAC – from seeing the program grow from the blue bin to recycling totes to curbside organics. Golden prize for Rob would be if the City provides a curbside trash container (as small as can be sustainable) to residents.

Susy – we should focus on digital methods for outreach besides the monthly e-newsletter- develop ways to condense tips and distribute these.

Sub-committee leads:

- Food Waste Reduction – Shirley
- Analytics - Sakiko
- Repair & Reuse - Suzanne

Agreement to meet between the RAC monthly meetings

Mike will coordinate setting up the meetings

Mike said a member could sign up for more than one sub-committee, in response to Catrina's question of rotating between committees

Suzanne's concern whether serving on more than one sub-committee might dilute focus

Sakiko thought "cross-pollination" representation would help

4. Closing

Action Items

Mike

- coordinate setting up sub-committee meetings
- Zoom social in November
- send list of members in each sub-committee
- send Zoom rules

Schedule updates on the RAC/CPAC sub-committee as a standing item every other month beginning December.

Susy - Share the updated outline for the sub-committees

Members of Food Waste Reduction & Reuse & Repair sub-committees to collaborate on putting together a list of places accepting donations.

Sakiko – Share link for weekly waste talk series

Other/Announcements

Rob reminded us about the annual MassRecycle Conference on October 28 and 29 in which Mike will be on a panel. Details for registration are available here:

<https://massrecycle.org/events/calendar/#id=108&wid=801&cid=1565>

Mike showed an image of the new recycling trucks (5 big trucks, 1 small)

Sakiko organizes a waste talk series at Harvard on Friday mornings from 11 – 11:30 AM.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM.