

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting
November 10, 2021, 8:00am – 9:30am
Virtual Minute Taker: Catrina Damrell

Members present: Ilana Bebachick, Leah Beckett, Catrina Damrell, Shirley Elliot, Debby Galef, Martha Henry, Sakiko Isomichi, Susy Jones, Debby Knight, Scott McGrath, Janet Mosley, Audrey Ng, Richard Nurse, Diane Roseman, Meera Singh, Quinten Steenhuis, Mary Verhage

Members absent: Holden Cookson, Laura Nichols

Staff present: Deb Albenberg, Meryl Brott, Camilla Elvis, Mike Orr

Public present: Dailey Branin, Helen Snively

1. Housekeeping

- October Minutes approved.

2. City Updates

- 1st week for Small Biz Compost Pilot
 - [Center for Ecotechnology](#) helped implement & talk to biz owners
 - Check it out on DPW's social channels, like [this link to Facebook page](#)
 - Also added in their energy/water savings, so they were able to tag team
 - Is there a list of all the businesses?
 - Mike: We don't share it, we don't want people (businesses) to not opt in because of public perception. Clients so far are mostly restaurants, some small grocery stores, full service restaurants, partial service like coffee spots, and some nonprofits like Daily Table
- What about Black Earth, which is now losing customers?
 - Mike: yes they've been critical in paving the way, but when you've got the trucks + labor force, it makes sense for the city to do it. The other part of this conversation is that there's still 30% food waste in our trash. We're trying to provide the model to other cities and towns that you can do this ...whether it's public/private partnership or solely public..
- \$220 savings - is that from the companies that used to compost privately or the tip fees?
 - Mike: it's a combo, it's not a hard number since not everyone filled out the survey. The number one motivator was financial savings
 - Financial data could be good info for communication strategies.

Yard Waste & The Food Project

- Great example of a circular economy
- Does the city ever organize leaf clean ups?
 - Not yet, but perhaps next year
 - Richard had this experience when living in the South End

- Is there a way to communicate “leaves in the street end up in trash” rather than yard waste?
 - Recollect, the texting service we use, can drop in reminders
- Guest speaker: Meeting with Anthony Tuccinardi of Inspectional Services Dept., City of Cambridge.
 - Q&A about rodents and how waste disposal impacts them and vice-versa.
 - Anthony is the go-to for private property rodent control
 - DPW tends to public property rodent control
 - Private property is tricky since city has limited control
 - What about adding public area compost bins, so as to get more food out of the trash?
 - Would it be tricky to get a clean stream there? it seems like there would be contamination issues
 - Are there cities we could talk to who do this?
 - Boulder, other Western cities

Anthony Tuccinardi:

- Inspectional services gets 90% of rodent complaints
- DPW gets the other 10%
- Pandemic led to upswing in activity around residential properties. At its height, restaurants were closed, rodents had to find food elsewhere

David Powers also works for city and deals with rats

- Anecdotal evidence from residents that they don’t see as much rodent activity when they compost. Separating out food scraps has helped their individual problems
- And our collective problem
- Anthony: city has started new free rodent assessment program
 - Once we get a call, we assess the property, and then do a neighborhood sweep of what might be affecting the rodents
 - Apply online, Waltham Chemical will come out and set baits, and we always urge folks to compost
 - Dog feces is a big problem, rats will go after that
 - Big Belly barrels help
- bird feeders are an issue, is there a type that you would recommend?
 - Anthony: we haven’t found one that doesn’t leak or sprinkle seeds
 - David: we just ask folks to suspend their bird feeding for a little while, people usually understand and comply, as long as we explain we’re not asking them to stop permanently
- Can you explain more about the process with Waltham Chemical?
 - Their system is very safe, traps are very difficult to open without the specific key
- Do you have a spreadsheet of success rates? Some think the composting program increases rodent issues, but sometimes numbers speak to people
 - Anthony: I don’t but I would be interested in doing a study together

- Mike: helping people understand how a rodent thinks and acts, plus anecdotal evidence
- David: have you seen any bins that were chewed up?
 - Mike: More than 40% of trash bins have holes, but fewer than 1% of compost bins have holes
- Residents with dogs routinely pick up their waste and place it in the trash. Does it make sense to use a compost style trash bin that could be locked, and then could be collected weekly?
 - Anthony: I like that idea of putting it in the compost bin and then throwing it out in the trash bin... But I don't know how it would affect the compost. Dog feces are a big source of food for rats.
 - Poop is not allowed in curbside compost because the food waste is added after they've done the bacterial treatment with human sewage.
 - Diane: we have a dog waste composter
- Some hawks are dying from rat poison. What are your thoughts on chemical baiting?
 - Anthony: It is one of our concerns, what is the effect of our chemicals on wildlife? we don't have a number on that
 - David: It's a tough balance, between predator protection and keeping the level of rats down. I'd certainly love to have more predators. The solution is not to bait our way out of the problem, it's going to be outreach & helping folks understand how they can mitigate the problem. IMP (integrated pest management) is the last resort...
 - Anthony: dry ice and other alternatives,
 - David: carbon monoxide only helps when the burrows are away from structures, dry ice (carbon dioxide) also works, as do dogs. The number one tool is to meet the property owner and provide education.
- Snap traps with milk crates over them secured with a heavy rock worked really well but you need someone out there to pick up carcasses.
 - Anthony: You need to do it somewhere that is safe...there are other things to remember like being active in your garden is a deterrent for them. Dr. Corrigan in NYC recommends " 3 days of food, 4th day set the trap."
 - David: there are items out there that you can use instead of chemical based bait: <https://www.domyown.com/ez-snap-rodent-rat-bait-station-p-16898.html>
 - Anthony: just remember you need to clean up afterwards!

3. Sub-committee topics

- [REVIEW RESULTS OF SURVEY](#)
 - Susy: across the board everyone is very interested
 - special skills and suggestions
 - how we might organize ourselves
 - We want to empower these groups to do something meaningful, using everyone's special skills
 - Could be somewhere to explore your passions

Mike: We still need to get more residents involved. Election Day compost bin handouts worked really well. We need folks to understand food waste composting at home or business first before we do public areas.

- We have diverse and transient communities

Mike: Maybe we should have a rodent symposium, or part of the orientation process for universities to talk about urban life.

Susy: how about the existing food waste newsletter? It was a successful pilot.

- The newsletter is ready through the remainder of 2021.
- Ilana: I wasn't involved in the Rehash It, Don't Trash It newsletters, and have really loved it

Education & Communication:

Sakiko: I'm very interested in forming a waste communicator in each part of the city - 13 different neighborhoods. Could each district have a waste coordinator? Having a sort of neighborhood association with regard to waste, separating food waste? What are some 1:1 conversations that we could have that could take advantage of people who are interested in each community?

Textiles:

- Mike: launching city program November 29th, curbside bins with financial incentives for city
- Chairs: Scott and Leah
- Shout out to DPW Newsletter link to Seattle & linking in Goodwill Industries...
- Susy: People always have some criticism, like with food waste diversion, and so now with textiles we could launch with more acknowledgement of the nuances and the impacts
- Mike: perhaps we could have Helpsy come in and speak to the program like we did with GLSD

Susy: Everyone is going to be doing communication and outreach

- Policy has come up. If someone wants to track a bill, then that's a fine project to take on.

Mike: MassDEP going to ban textiles + mattresses from trash Nov 1 2022

- only ½ ton per week as of Nov 1 2022
- Huge opportunity to talk about small business composting expansion, textile programs
- Webinar coming up soon with the DEP's Master Plan

Susy: Subcommittee Chair roles

- set up 1x month meetings
- Check in with Susy, Mike, Scott on setting up goals
- Chairs: set up a meeting between now and the next meeting
- Google Drive folders will be created

4. Closing

- Announcements

- Diane: I helped out at a STEAM event, and it was so much fun. Children love the sorting game, we had a line of people who were excited to decide which items would go in the trash, recycling, and compost.

5. ACTION ITEMS:

- Subcommittee organization - Mike/Susy/Scott will set up Google Drive folder
- CORE/GLSD virtual tour next week - please share publicly, virtual tour with Save that Stuff, Waste Management
- Library kitchen compost giveaway - [Sign up on this doc](#) (the more the merrier)
- Photos of people composting at home - send to Mike

City updates

Small Business Compost Pilot:

- 65 businesses are registered to start during the week of November 8.
 - 41 of those businesses did not compost prior to this program.
- Apprx 22 tons per week are expected to be collected.
 - Apprx 12.5 tons/ wk are tons from businesses new to composting.
- On average, businesses report they'll save \$220 per month due to this Pilot.
- RecyclingWorks, a free technical assistance program for businesses funded by the MassDEP, will be assisting DPW in technical assistance. RecyclingWorks helps businesses reduce waste and maximize recycling, reuse and food recovery opportunities.

Yard Waste & The Food Project. Read about this pilot project:

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/Departments/publicworks/news/2021/10/thefoodproject>

Chat

08:10:35 From Susy Jones to Everyone:

<https://www.facebook.com/CambridgeDPW/photos/pcb.4507444636011897/4507444582678569>

08:18:21 From Meryl Brott - City of Cambridge to Everyone:

We should give out leaf bags for anyone who wants to initiate this.

08:18:40 From Scott Macgrath to Everyone:

Love that!

08:18:53 From MICHAEL ORR to Everyone:

I think we could do that!

08:21:01 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

maybe we could put that message out on those sandwich boards like you use to get people to think about food wastes..

08:21:26 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

Also.. we should post it with gardeners listservs, Green Cambridge, etc.,

08:21:45 From MICHAEL ORR to Everyone:

yes please, Helen

08:25:53 From Susy Jones to Everyone:

Subcommittee Planning Doc:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BpouNSShKPcmy1MdRkfBC2VnqwUAMvPD3yd3yysPV8U/edit?usp=sharing>

08:26:19 From mary to Everyone:

Why not do a pilot and get some answers?

08:30:29 From Diane Roseman to Susy Jones(Direct Message):

Sorry I thought I filled it out! Happy to do textiles

08:31:23 From MICHAEL ORR to Susy Jones(Direct Message):

when you get a second, Anthony has just joined the meeting. No huge rush

08:36:10 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

david you sound like those chipmunks!

08:39:34 From Susy Jones to MICHAEL ORR(Direct Message):

Sakiko has hand raised

08:46:17 From Susy Jones to Diane Roseman(Direct Message):

diane do you have a question?

08:48:04 From mary to Everyone:

Mike, how about including info on dog waste in your newsletter?

08:48:24 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

great idea Mary!

08:48:25 From MICHAEL ORR to Susy Jones(Direct Message):

yes--I want to reach out to Diane and learn about this digester!

08:49:04 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

thanks, Debby.. I was going to ask about that too.

08:49:13 From deb to Everyone:

Which neighborhoods have the most rat activity?

08:49:14 From Camilla Elvis to Everyone:

Is the dog waste composter outdoors - is it hard to get into for rats?

08:51:12 From MICHAEL ORR to Everyone:

IPM=Integrated Pest Management

08:51:37 From Susy Jones to MICHAEL ORR(Direct Message):

We have about 30 mins left for subcommittee talk. Obviously people probably find this interesting (I might be biased). But maybe wrapping up and connecting convo to RAC work whenever you want?

08:51:39 From Diane Roseman to Everyone:

I'll dig up the link for it---it's a latched bin.

08:51:46 From deb to Everyone:

When you mention to residents they could compost to keep rats away, are they receptive to the idea?

08:52:01 From MICHAEL ORR to Susy Jones(Direct Message):

OK--I'll let Helen ask the last question. is that OK?

08:52:11 From Susy Jones to MICHAEL ORR(Direct Message):

Yep!

08:52:48 From Susy Jones to MICHAEL ORR(Direct Message):

Don't want to cut short, just timekeeping :)

08:54:04 From MICHAEL ORR to Susy Jones(Direct Message):

no--I appreciate that. We could spend forever talking about this. Feel free to go right up to 9:25 for subcommittees

08:54:26 From Diane Roseman to Everyone:

[https://zerowasteusa.com/yard-buddy-homeowner-dog-waste-station/?gclid=Cj0KCQiA-K2MBhC-](https://zerowasteusa.com/yard-buddy-homeowner-dog-waste-station/?gclid=Cj0KCQiA-K2MBhC-ARIsAMtLKRtjRBaqKtpb8QRSYIKZ1autzM5xn7JwOfLVpR4jIN1VT93njJtlvNEaAtYrEALw_wcB)

[ARIsAMtLKRtjRBaqKtpb8QRSYIKZ1autzM5xn7JwOfLVpR4jIN1VT93njJtlvNEaAtYrEALw_wcB](https://zerowasteusa.com/yard-buddy-homeowner-dog-waste-station/?gclid=Cj0KCQiA-K2MBhC-ARIsAMtLKRtjRBaqKtpb8QRSYIKZ1autzM5xn7JwOfLVpR4jIN1VT93njJtlvNEaAtYrEALw_wcB)

08:54:50 From David Power to Everyone:

<https://www.domyown.com/ez-snap-rodent-rat-bait-station-p-16898.html>

08:57:37 From Scott Macgrath to Everyone:

Diane - I love this idea. Do you think it is something the city could implement in dog parks?

08:58:08 From Diane Roseman to Everyone:

yes I think in every park, not just in dog parks

08:58:48 From Susy Jones to Everyone:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BpouNSShKPcmY1MdRkfBC2VnqwUAMvPD3yd3yysPV8U/edit?usp=sharing>

08:59:59 From Meryl Brott - City of Cambridge to Everyone:

Yes, we have to make sure it's clear to residents that dog waste never goes with food scraps.

09:00:36 From Diane Roseman to Everyone:

I imagine dirty diapers are a problem as well?

09:01:34 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

i love your thinking, Richard.. but how many dog owners are going to bother with that process? I wonder if there's an easier solution.. like a group of neighbors invest in one of those things Diane has?

09:03:02 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

i'd like to join the textile group.. and do more of the research Debby K is talking about.. SO much to understand there.. and implications for working with residents.. SO many students/transients disposing of clothing.

09:03:11 From Scott Macgrath to Everyone:

I was planning on doing that exact thing with my neighbors, Helen!

09:03:38 From Deborah Galef to Everyone:

I was surprised at how many people didn't already have compost bins.

09:03:54 From Diane Roseman to Everyone:

There are many models. I don't necessarily endorse ours.

09:04:00 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

yay scott.. maybe we can find a smaller less techy solution?

09:07:08 From Camilla Elvis to Everyone:

One idea is to consider whether they can be reused - especially the seasonal ones

09:07:19 From Richard Nurse to Everyone:

Mike suggested flushing dog waste. Good idea. What it does require is replacing the plastic bag with a flushable alternative paper product. This would be a major shift in thinking.

09:07:29 From Quinten Steenhuis to Everyone:

good idea re: reuse of articles

09:11:44 From Shirley Elliott to Everyone:

Sorry everyone, I need to run. Looking forward to upcoming projects!

09:13:57 From Audrey Ng to Everyone:

Thought others might find this article interesting and inspiring as we move towards the holidays <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/07/opinion/culture/holiday-gift-shopping-secondhand.html>

09:14:14 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

camilla and quinton.. when you say reuse, to you mean clothing? I wonder if the textile group could focus on creating a really solid list of the groups that share clothing? Right now, so many messages on Buy Nothing and Next Door, etc. about where to donate winter coats.. but it feels so scatter-shot

09:14:29 From Leah Beckett to Everyone:

Just found the Seattle Times article – thanks for mentioning it!
<https://www.seattletimes.com/pacific-nw-magazine/heres-what-goodwill-really-does-with-the-stuff-you-donate/>

09:14:53 From Camilla Elvis to Everyone:

@helen - just reposting the rehash it don't trash newsletters

09:15:52 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

camilla.. such interesting parallels between reusing/making use of food wastes and reusing clothing :)

09:20:09 From Diane Roseman to Everyone:

I recommend gifting "services" this year! Theater tickets, museum memberships, Pilates sessions :-)

No supply chain problems with those...

09:20:28 From Audrey Ng to Everyone:

Love that idea, Diane

09:23:02 From Scott Macgrath to Everyone:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1hCuObUaafMpnSjPUUGAOA1IfwcZnijl5?usp=sharing>

09:26:14 From MICHAEL ORR to Everyone:

- o Monday 11/15 O'Neill Branch
- o Tuesday 11/16 Valente Branch
- o Wednesday 11/17 Main Library
- o Thursday 11/18 O'Connell Branch
- o Friday 11/19 Central Sq Branch

09:30:18 From Meryl Brott - City of Cambridge to Everyone:

The game on the website is also a lot of fun! www.cambridgema.gov/recycle
09:30:52 From Catrina Damrell to Everyone:

Do I need to capture the chat for minutes? Do we have access after?

09:31:00 From Scott Macgrath to Everyone:

I need help finding a small electronics repair shop! I know we have a list but couldn't find anything relevant there