

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes

January 11, 2023, 8:00am – 9:30am

Virtual Minute Taker: Debby Galef

Members present: Lee Elliott, Debby Galef, Martha Henry, Sakiko Isomichi, Susy Jones, Debby Knight, Scott MacGrath, Audrey Ng, Laura Nichols, Richard Nurse, Diane Roseman, Meera Singh, Mary Verhage

Members absent: Leah Beckett, Dailey Brannin, Holden Cookson, Janet Mosley, Quinten Steenhuis

Staff Present: Mike Orr

Public present: Carol Gieseke, Elka Kuhlman, Helen Snively, Amy Waltz, David Wintermeyer

1. Housekeeping, 8:00am

- December Minutes were approved.

2. City Updates

Trash collection was down 7% last year from 2021. Highest single year reduction we've had but we're now at 2019 level. Most likely due to compost collection push and separate textile collection. City's population is growing but most new buildings are large and use private haulers. However more folks are working from home these days and that would add to the trash.

City's mandatory recycling ordinance can be enforced here but there is no mandatory compost collection. The state has the ability to oversee trash collection insofar as excluded items are placed in it. Recycling in large buildings can be a problem. Property managers may not want to and needn't talk to city. New focus for DPW.

3. Sub-committee breakouts

- **Textile Subcommittee:**

Need to raise awareness on reducing textile consumption. Bin use going well. Flyer went out to schools. What did we accomplish?

- Attended and participated in virtual Helpsy presentations
- Drafted a Flyer for community outreach
- Collaborated with DPW for siting new Helpsy bins
- Leveraged data from Helpsy to help with informational awareness of textile recycling
- Attempted to host a sock darning club to refocus on raising awareness of reducing/reusing textiles before disposing of them

- **Food Waste:**

- Very rarely does big stuff happen in subcommittees, do small things more often
- Connect Food Waste & outreach - maybe makes sense to merge those conversations
- Can we be more like citizen scientists? Do more community outreach? Get more data to bring back to group/DPW
- Need to better utilize outreach to collect some key metrics for DPW: measure bins, but also measure connections with people, maybe have a 'citizen science' role
- Trash bin flyering
- DPW - goal of 5000 new households composting (only 50 percent currently participating), RAC may want to use its influence to be at those events and educate
- What are other places to reach people? Harvard Square open meeting?
- Using libraries to reach out to people - can there be a station at each library? A more formal partnership? Something interactive?

- Need some kind of publicity campaign to capture attention and reach out to more groups in Cambridge, multi-cultural etc., connect to larger zero waste/methane/ghg gases throughout the world
 - Getting the methane message out
 - Could we have community leaders have conversations with parts of Cambridge community we don't typically reach - asking some of those questions we developed on Sakiko's survey, but more personal. Churches? Other places? Understand the barriers. Getting kids involved.
 - East Cambridge has lower participation, also higher rates of rodents - can rodent control be more of a motivation/message?
- **Outreach:** More tabling, on a regular basis. Would be good to know what kind of outreach has been done and see how/if it correlates to positive change. Focus on non-complying neighborhoods. Group discussions and door-to-door. AD needs clearer explanation. Need to focus on getting textiles out of the trash in addition to promoting green bin use.

4. Closing, 9:20am

- No further public comment
- Action Plan/Decisions
 - None, this being the last meeting of the term.
- Announcements
 - February 22 CORE tour. Contact Mike if you're interested. Might also be an opportunity for Styrofoam recycling, but must be (only) the right kind.
 - April's meeting could be in person so we can meet Kathy Watkins, new DPW commissioner.
 - May 13 is next shredding event in front of Senior Center in Central Sq. Maybe an opportunity for tabling.

Committee members are appointed by the City Manager. All meetings are open to the public. Members of the public may speak during the public comment section for up to two minutes. If you wish to speak, please contact Mike Orr at 617 349-4815 or morr@cambridgema.gov by 1pm the day before the meeting. You may also email or mail written comments for inclusion in public comments in lieu of speaking during the meeting. The Committee Chair must grant permission to non-members who request to speak at the meeting.

Meeting Minutes are located online here: CambridgeMA.Gov/Services/Recycling

Upcoming Meetings in 2023

All meetings will be held virtually until further notice.

- February 8, 2023
- March 8, 2023
- April 12, 2023
- May 10, 2023
- June 14, 2023

Call Chat:

From Meera Singh to Everyone 08:05 AM

Sorry not offering to be min taker today

From Audrey Ng to Everyone 08:06 AM

I have to step out for an 8:30 meeting. otherwise I'd take minutes!

From Mike Orr to Everyone 08:16 AM

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/01/headway/composting-food-leftovers.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare>

From Susy Jones to Everyone 08:17 AM

They link to this website in the article which I scanned: <https://savemorethanfood.org/make-a-difference/at-work/>

From Amy Waltz to Everyone 08:25 AM

A variety of approaches will be crucial for the urgent change needed!

I think we need a renewed public campaign that conveys the urgency of removing organics from the trash in order to address Methane gas to combat the climate crisis. The fact that if we accomplish this quickly, we will both be doing our part, and inspiring others to reduce Methane perhaps before it is too late! Europe has numerous zero waste cities, but the US seems to lack leadership in this area even though our landfills are responsible for about 15% of methane - along with food production - which we can also influence to some degree. The US needs cities to inspire others to quick action! Lets Race to Zero Waste! It has tremendous benefits & will inspire other communities to join in protecting the environment and reducing methane!- Reduce food waste- Compost any food scraps or yard waste- Donate or recycle textiles & mattressesThe systems are in place for rapid trash reduction! It is only a matter of public will to reduce trash by 90%! Let's do this now to have the best chance of keeping the planet li

From Audrey Ng to Everyone 08:32 AM

I've got to run to another meeting. Thanks everyone! Please let me know if there are action items I can help with.

From Lee (Shirley Elliott) to Everyone 08:35 AM

I'm breaking up sorry

From Susy Jones to Everyone 09:05 AM

Here are some notes from the food waste/compost

Thoughts on subcommittees:

- Very rarely does big stuff happen in subcommittees, do small things more often
- Connect Food Waste & outreach - maybe makes sense to merge those conversations
- Can we be more like citizen scientists? Do more community outreach? Get more data to bring back to group/DPW
- Better utilize outreach to collect some key metrics for DPW: measure bins, but also measure connections with people, maybe have a 'citizen science' role

New ideas:

- Trash Bin Flyering
- DPW - goal of 5000 new households composting (only 50 percent currently participating), RAC may want to use its power to be at those events and educate
- What are other places to reach people? Harvard Square open meeting?
- Using libraries to reach out to people - can there be a station at each library? A more formal partnership? Something interactive?
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- Getting the methane message
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From Me to Everyone 09:07 AM

TEXTILES:

What did we accomplish?

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2023 Draft Plan

- Refocus on waste reduction and reuse through informational campaigns
- Slight pause/hiatus to reassess with new cohort of members

From Sakiko Isomichi to Everyone 09:10 AM

Next steps for Outreach Subcommittee: keep track of what's been done, do reach on a regular basis, arrange subcommittees by projects instead of themes

From Martha Henry to Everyone 09:10 AM

Sakiko, I love the idea of arranging subcommittees on project instead of themes.

From Sakiko Isomichi to Everyone 09:11 AM

That was Debby Galef's idea, Martha!

From Martha Henry to Everyone 09:13 AM

Great idea, Debby!

From Sakiko Isomichi to Everyone 09:14 AM

so awesome, Lee!!

From Amy Waltz to Everyone 09:28 AM

Thanks so much for all the work everyone has done to make rapid waste reduction now mostly a matter of public will! This is amazing! If anyone wants to help flyer trash bins to encourage composting, let me know! amyswartz@gmail.com