

City of Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee

March 11, 2015 - Minutes Taken by Debby Knight

Members present: Debby Galef, Rob Gogan, Susy Jones, Debby Knight, Michael Orr, Meera Singh

Members absent: Laura Nichols, Keith Cialino, Mary Verhage, Joanna Vanden, Janet Mosely

Staff present: Meryl Brott, Kelly Dunn, John Fitzgerald

Guests: Helen Snively, Judy Nathans

Housekeeping

The January minutes were not approved. No quorum.

Discussion Topics/City Updates

Composting update:

John explained that the department has been looking at budgets to see how the program might grow. The current curbside composting pilot has been extended through October 2015; in November it will be extended to the entire Monday route. The hope is to take the program city-wide in subsequent years. There was a very positive reaction to this report, followed by questions and discussion of the details – what materials are handed out, how the pilot buy-in may differ from the full route program, haulers and compost site, etc. Meryl reported that nine schools have lunchroom composting; the Fletcher/Maynard will begin next Monday.

Plastic bag ban update:

The hearing on changes to the ordinance will be held Thursday, March 12 at 5:30 in the Sullivan Chambers.

Ordinance update:

Staff members continue to work on the draft and want to have it ready for the Commissioner soon (trying to make an internal deadline for staff).

Paint care update:

Rob reported that the bill is now in docket at the State House and will probably be introduced later this month. The manufacturers like the Paint Care model, in which a consortium deals with the excess paint. The odds look good. Rob urged committee members to contact Cambridge representatives and senators (8). He suggested calling and talking to their staff administrators, demonstrating it's an important issue for the City. Suggested adding it to the next e-mail blast to encourage more people to call or write.

Sub-Committee Reports

Materials management in city's waste and climate goals

This team has been thinking about the 2020 waste reduction goal of 16lb trash/household/week. The expansion of curbside composting/organics will have a large impact. At a projected rate of 35% participation (rather than 65% in pilot), data indicate that the trash rate may fall from 18.2 to 15.8lb/HH/week.

Other programs or ideas under discussion to further reduce the rate:

- Curbside mattress collection (est. could remove 80 tons per year from the trash) – John mentioned the department is discussing details, the next step is to for Owen to visit UTEC.
- Expand donation of reusable furniture
- CPAC link-up (coordinate on action planning around reducing waste)
- City-provided barrels. John stated that when the organics programs matures in a few years, along with the mature recycling program, the barrel issue will be clearer – on hold for now.

School curriculum on waste reduction

Continuing to define areas where efforts may be most productive in changing behavior, reflecting on what has and hasn't worked well in the past.

- Hope to work with one school next year, try piloting some of our ideas
- Current ideas include poster contest, contest between schools, pledge, surveys.
- Next steps: intersect with the City Sprouts program in some way this summer, find out what After School programs in schools are currently doing related to waste reduction or materials management.
- Still waiting to check in with Owen about when he may meet with Lisa Scolaro, get his opinion on working with schools
- Meryl talked about the Go Green Challenge she and Kristen von Hoffmann implemented last spring
- Meera shared that the Eco-Action course is in the catalog for next year's offerings at CRLS

Recycling outreach budget review and plans for outreach campaign on 5Rs

Ideas under discussion:

- Using strategically-placed sandwich boards to promote things like the furniture donation program. Perhaps a big banner across Mass Ave. in Central Square
- Human capital – thinking about how to recruit and use volunteers
- Put a face to a name around promoting waste diversion
- Phone banks? Social media?
- Large lawn signs – there are currently some large City sign locations
- When's the ideal time? Maybe target move/in move/out times, late April/early May and late August/early September

Question: What's the status of the furniture re-use app that the Harvard student was developing?

Announcements

- The next RAC social: Wednesday, April 1 at 5:30 at Cambridge Common (between Harvard and Porter Squares)
- Lesley University is a finalist in the 20th Annual MassRecycle Recycling Awards
- Cambridge Public School District was nominated by the Mass. Dept. of Elementary & Secondary Education as one of three candidates from Massachusetts to be considered for the Green Ribbon Schools Award given by the U.S. Department of Education. This program recognizes schools, districts and postsecondary institutions that are 1) reducing environmental impact and costs; 2) improving health and wellness; and 3) teaching environmental education.

Action Items

- Add information about the Paint Care bill to the next e-newsletter so people can contact their representatives
- Resend the paint stewardship letter with these minutes
- Bring list of events for the season to the next meeting so we can think about outreach/volunteers
- Continue sub-committee conference calls and/or meetings

The meeting adjourned at 9:30.