

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes  
December 10, 2025, 8:00am – 9:30am  
Virtual Meeting  
Minute Taker: Stephanie Wasiuk

**Members present:** Dailey Brannin, Dave Demme, Debby Galef, Tracie Gordon, Sakiko Isomichi, Debby Knight, Elka Kuhlman, Richard Nurse, Carlie Peters, Diane Roseman, Meera Singh, Helen Snively, Rob Vandenabeele, Stephanie Wasiuk

**Members absent:** Emily Lee, Dawn Quirk, Quinten Steenhuis

**Staff Present:** Mike Orr

**Public present:** Courtney Forrester, Tamene Tedla, Amy Waltz

**Housekeeping**

- Vote on November 12th, 2025 Minutes - Approved

**City Updates**

- Highlights of 2023-2025
  - i. Mike shared a photo presentation of all the activities we did as RAC in the past two years.
  - ii. Free Stores seem to get bigger and bigger each time! We've come a long way.
  - iii. Handing out bins at the parking registration line has been very fulfilling. Biggest need and most requested is more compost bags.
- What do you wish we could have done more of over last 3 years? What should we do for the next 3 years?
  - i. Brainstorm other events around the city that would allow us to reach people we aren't already reaching to give out compost bins (e.g. block parties).
  - ii. Organize a gathering for folks who don't speak much English with a community member who can translate and share what we're trying to do. Be conscious of folks who may not want to disclose they aren't native English speakers in the current political climate.
  - iii. Continue to figure out how to work with property managers on proper disposal within their buildings.
  - iv. Explore petitions and if they could be useful for certain issues. Can we come up with a simple statement that people will be receptive to?
  - v. Could we consider dedicating the last portion of certain meetings throughout the year for sub-committees or working on actionable items?
- Waste Sort results

	2025	2022	2019	2016
Recyclables	15.6%	13.0%	13.2%	16.7%
Organics (food waste + non-food organics)	34.8%	29.0%	26.4%	41.5%
Textiles	4.1%	4.5%	3.4%	4.2%
Metal & e-waste	1.2%	5.3%	1.4%	2.8%
Trash	44.3%	48.2%	55.6%	34.8%

- vi. Hard to know if these numbers are truly representative, however they're the best we can get.
- vii. Why do we think the food waste numbers are going up? High turnover rate and misalignment in which buildings have city trash collection vs food waste and which are included in this study.

- viii. What influence did the pandemic have on habits and what were we making progress on that hasn't gotten back to its pre-pandemic levels?
- ix. What influence does the price of compost bags have on these habits? The DPW is looking into this a lot to figure out how to make the bags more accessible. Looking to other states for examples. Richard is estimating that it costs about \$1 to produce a roll of bags. Compost bags also have a shelf-life and it can be tricky to manage. Exploring the possibility of having people use "regular" plastic bags, but that would come with its own challenges (mostly around perception, i.e. does plastic reach the slurry?).
- x. Many of the new buildings in mid-Cambridge will have many more people in them and we need to think about accommodating food waste.
- xi. What opportunities do we have to share this information with residents and with the City Council? Mike will think about how and when it would be best to do it.
- xii. How do we reach the people we haven't already reached or who are actively interested and involved in this?

### **Closing/Public Comment**

- The RAC is doing great things! Use our power to encourage the City Council for the enforcement piece. Focus on convenience.

### **Action Items**

- Mike to let us know when the ordinance is supposed to go to the City Council hearing so we could consider attending (expected maybe in February). In the meantime, we can all reach out to the City Council via email or attend an individual Councilor's meetings.
- Create sub-committee for City Council outreach. Tracie to send a poll to determine when we should meet.
  - Debby K and/or Helen to share Globe article.
  - Rob to draft email to City Council.

### **Announcements/Retiring Committee Members**

- Retiring Committee Members: Sakiko, Quinten, Dawn, and Diane

Chat: 2025-12-10 07:59:57 From read.ai meeting notes to Everyone:

Tamene added read.ai meeting notes to the meeting.

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Type "read stop" to disable, or "opt out" to delete meeting data.

2025-12-10 08:03:32 From Amy W to Everyone:

Hi Mike- & everyone! Mike, just wondering if you have further breakdown of waste sort categories that you could share ie organic & food waste: how much in each; what was the diaper/dog waste - for public ed purposes & goals.

2025-12-10 08:03:38 From Debby Galef to Everyone:

I just sent out an email to all requesting minute takers for Jan. and Feb. Please sign up. Thanks!

Carlie M Peters: ❤️

2025-12-10 08:19:58 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

love the Free Store shots!

2025-12-10 08:20:34 From Diane Roseman (she/hers) to Everyone:

I'm sorry I'm off camera, I'm visiting my dad and Aunt in Florida. I wrote a little recycling vignette.

My aunt Barbara stars: Setting: Kitchen

Barbara: Diane help me take the trash and recycling outside

Diane: I can just take it out myself

Barbara: no no no it's much too much and it's disgusting out there

Diane (glancing at the pizza box and two little bags): ok Barbara

Setting: trash room (well lit and clean)

Barbara sorts her trash and recycling. Throws the Styrofoam egg carton in with the paper

Diane: So that's for paper

Barbara: yes that's an egg carton

Diane: ok but it's made of Styrofoam

Barbara: egg cartons are made of paper and they go in that bin

Diane: yes usually but that particular one is Styrofoam

Barbara: <sigh> everyone does that

Diane follows her back to the house dejectedly. We are doomed.

Elka: 😂

Elka: 😞

2025-12-10 08:23:07 From Amy W to Everyone:

We did a lot of compost bin tagging as well - I think mostly in 2023?

2025-12-10 08:28:12 From Tamene Tedla to Everyone:

Hi Mike, did I turnoff? I don't see on my side

2025-12-10 08:28:38 From Amy W to Everyone:

Block party event coordination could be very effective!

Tracie Gordon: 👍

2025-12-10 08:30:40 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

i agree on doing outreach at events in our neighborhood. Can we get ahold of that list, please?

Also, we can talk to people directly about how they recycle the paper plates, leftover food, etc.

Amy W: 👍

2025-12-10 08:39:43 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

city council meetings re the ordinance: Do we have a connection with someone on the council who'd know in advance? Or a staff member? I wonder how we could get info before Monday morning!

2025-12-10 08:44:21 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

Rob, I like your idea of lobbying councilors. Maybe we keep an eye on the process and if it isn't moving, we get together and meet a few of them.. I'd go with you to whatever. And I bet others would too.

Meera Singh: 👍

2025-12-10 08:44:29 From Rob Vandenabeele to Everyone:

Anyone can start a change.org petition.

2025-12-10 08:45:07 From Amy W to Everyone:

Yes Rob! Proactive comments/conversations with city council can be very productive.

Meera Singh, Rob Vandenabeele: 👍

2025-12-10 08:49:36 From Rob Vandenabeele to Everyone:

My theory is that there is no significant enforcement, especially in large residential rental buildings.

2025-12-10 08:50:25 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

Rob, I agree

2025-12-10 08:52:10 From Courtney L Forrester to Everyone:

to clarify - are these numbers are what is still showing IN the trash? So things like home compost and Helpsy would help the trash decrease - because the residents are finding alternate methods (waste diversion).

Tracie Gordon: 👍

2025-12-10 08:55:37 From Courtney L Forrester to Everyone:

<https://www.telegram.com/story/news/local/2024/07/24/worcester-unveils-vending-machines-for-pay-as-you-throw-bags/74507960007/>

2025-12-10 08:56:56 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Replying to "to clarify - are these numbers are what is still s...":

I was also confused....backyard composting and Helpsy should reduce that waste showing in trash.

2025-12-10 08:59:26 From Amy W to Everyone:

The overall trash/person is decreasing, correct? So all the overall tonnage in these categories are basically decreasing. The trash sort just measures the percentage of each category in the trash we sort.

2025-12-10 09:01:05 From Courtney L Forrester to Everyone:

Replying to "The overall trash/person is decreasing, correct? ...":

i don't see tonnages in this chart - so unsure. However, it appears that the make up of what's in the trash bag is seeing an increase in recyclables and organics still going in trash. But a decrease in metal and e-waste!!

2025-12-10 09:02:30 From Amy W to Everyone:

Isn't the concern about microplastics in the environment?

Rob Vandenabeele: 👍

2025-12-10 09:02:36 From Tracie Gordon to Everyone:

Stephanie, I just created a workshop that does exactly that, and my mother's company started doing it in Nassau. Everyone said I should offer the service here. I told them I can't, it's against the law. We went through a 2000 sq ft. home and separated, cleaned out, showed them how to distribute, separate, etc. I also had them use paper bags. We had fun and created a really good system, but I can't do it here because I'm on the committee. I told my Mom to do.

Stephanie Wasiuk: 👍

2025-12-10 09:03:25 From Rob Vandenabeele to Everyone:

Replying to "Isn't the concern about microplastics in the envir...":

It's not just PFAS that's of concern regarding plastics in the environment.

2025-12-10 09:04:09 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

ok, thanks all of you.. It's about plastics getting into the environment through the food waste process.. Somehow I missed that.

2025-12-10 09:04:44 From Debby Knight to Everyone:

1 roll of the green bags is 8 oz

2025-12-10 09:07:49 From Debby Galef to Everyone:

We need to focus more on rat prevention. Open trash barrels are really bad for that. Maybe folks don't understand?

Rob Vandenabeele: 👍

2025-12-10 09:08:22 From Amy W to Everyone:

My experience in speaking with people in the line waiting for parking passes is that nearly everyone wants to divert food waste! I do not think we are reaching all willing participants. Perhaps this is due to the rapid turn over in residents.

2025-12-10 09:08:24 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

agreed, Deb.. The rats and compost issue feels like a good place to focus.

Rob Vandenabeele: 👍

2025-12-10 09:10:40 From Amy W to Everyone:

I want to second the idea of having working committees.

Rob Vandenabeele: 👍

2025-12-10 09:12:17 From Amy W to Everyone:

Yes, Convenience is key! Drop sites. Enforcement has ripple effects, & sets expectations.

2025-12-10 09:12:26 From Rob Vandenabeele to Everyone:

Where are we with the name change?

2025-12-10 09:16:21 From Amy W to Everyone:

Medford has fairly new weekly curbside food waste collection. They are now planning to change trash collection every other week. This kind of common sense schedule change will change how people think about processing their trash.

Courtney L Forrester: 👍

2025-12-10 09:19:27 From Courtney L Forrester to Everyone:

Replying to "Medford has fairly new weekly curbside food waste...":

Hamilton /Wenham did this, which some success, but ultimately ended up doing PAYT for the "off weeks" which then lost the impact and folks then just saw it as an inconvenience - now it's a overflow program (35 gallon cart included, with overflow handled in an PAYT bag)

2025-12-10 09:20:13 From Courtney L Forrester to Everyone:

Replying to "Medford has fairly new weekly curbside food waste...":

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/case-study-town-of-hamilton-three-sort/download>

2025-12-10 09:21:51 From Courtney L Forrester to Everyone:

Replying to "Medford has fairly new weekly curbside food waste...":

[https://www.mma.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/advocate\\_v29n4\\_around\\_state\\_hamilton\\_wenham.pdf](https://www.mma.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/advocate_v29n4_around_state_hamilton_wenham.pdf)

2025-12-10 09:23:16 From Amy W to Everyone:

Replying to "Medford has fairly new weekly curbside food waste...":

Yes, Ongoing education & outreach are key for effectiveness. I think Medford also has a Payt aspect.

2025-12-10 09:25:53 From Courtney L Forrester to Everyone:

Replying to "Medford has fairly new weekly curbside food waste...":

yes, they have overflow bags if households have more trash than the 64-gallon cart the City provides for weekly collection.

2025-12-10 09:26:34 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

yes, I think our focus is food waste. And if a lot of them hear from us in various ways that will get it on their radars

2023

# Highlights

- Meera joined Brooke Nash and Adam Minter on a large Storytelling Webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABqTGBccy1k>. Sponsored by 8 municipalities and 3 regional waste groups
- Focus of the RAC:
  - Curbside Compost
  - BYOB Outreach
  - Textiles/move-out
- Reduce & Reuse Webpage published with suggestions from the RAC
- Circular Economy Business Directory Google Map published: 95,000 View To Date.
- Cambridge textiles featured on WCVB's [The Chronicle](#)!
- City of Cambridge Zero Waste efforts featured on front page of [Waste Advantage](#)!
- BYOB tallying results
  - 2016 (pre-Ordinance): Apprx 65% of bags used while shopping were single-use bags.
  - 2017 (post-ordinance): Apprx 34% of bags used were single-use bags.
  - 2023: Apprx 40% of bags used were single-use bags.
- Start discussing ZWMP 2.0



# Covanta Incinerator Tour



WM CORe  
pre-  
processing  
Tour



UTEC Tour



UTECH Tour



Clothing  
Swap



Fix-It Clinic  
featuring  
Dave  
Demme



We gave  
out all of  
the finished  
compost!



Elka, Amy,  
and  
Stephanie  
help break  
the news  
that we ran  
out of  
finished  
compost



Don't Worry!  
We had an  
additional 20  
tons delivered  
the next week.



Tracie, Elka  
Amy and  
DPW staff  
Jalen giving  
out kitchen  
bins



Lee and  
Deb talking  
to people  
about  
compost



Amy Waltz  
doing  
outreach at  
event



Yard Waste  
Tour—West  
Bridgewater



Cambridge  
Community  
Center Swap

Organized by  
Helen  
Snively

2024

# Highlights

- Begin discussing how to reduce move-out waste; eventually leading to Cambridge DPW applying for a grant for collecting and diverting move-out waste.
- ZWMP 2.0 kick-off
- In-person meeting with RRS for ZWMP 2.0
- Free Store!
- Drafted letter to Commissioner Watkins as a unified RAC
- Recap City Council hearing where City announced draft strategies of ZWMP 2.0
- Comment on draft strategies



April  
Free  
Store



# April Finished Compost Giveaway



April  
Finished  
Compost  
Giveaway



# Zero Waste Master Plan Kickoff



# Zero Waste Master Plan Kickoff



# Zero Waste Master Plan Kickoff



# Zero Waste Master Plan Kickoff



# Casella Tour



# GLSD Tour



# GLSD Tour

# 2024 Summer Social





August  
Free  
Store



August  
Free  
Store



August Free Store



August  
Free  
Store

2025

# Highlights

- Discussion with Office of Sustainability
- Vote to change name to Waste Reduction Advisory Committee.
- Attend City Council hearing to finalize ZWMP 2.0
- Start a Zero Waste Ambassador group; RAC members sharing their experience
- Mobile Recycle Center is funded by Participatory Budgeting!
- Free Store!
- Move out waste pilot is a success!
- New curbside recycling contract includes 2 new EVs.



Earth Day



Earth Day



Earth  
Day



Earth Day



Mayfair



# June Free Store



# June Free Store



June  
Free  
Store





# June Free Store

# 2025 Summer Social





Move-  
Out  
Waste  
Reduction  
Pilot



# Move- Out Waste Reduction Pilot



Move-  
Out  
Waste  
Reduction  
Pilot



# Science Fest

CAMBRIDGE



Waste  
Sort