

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Minutes

January 8, 2025, 8:00am – 9:30am

Minute Taker: Dawn Quirk

Virtual Meeting

Members present: Dailey Brannin, Debby Galef, Tracie Gordon, Debby Knight, Elka Kuhlman, Emily Lee, Richard Nurse, Carlie Peters, Dawn Quirk, Diane Roseman, Meera Singh, Helen Snively, Quinten Steenhuis, Rob Vandenabeele, Stephanie Wasiuk

Members Absent:, Dave Demme, Lee Elliott, Sakiko Isomichi

Staff Present: Mike Orr

Public Present: Tamene Tedla, Amy Waltz

December minutes were approved.

Waste Disposal numbers

Waste Data 2023 vs 2024

	Trash (tons/day)	Recycle (tons/day)	Compost (tons/day)
2023	48.5	31.8	8.4
2024 (est)	48.3	30.9	8.9

Trash and recycling down slightly, compost up a bit

Some new residential buildings at Cambridge Crossing are composting via city

Move Out Waste

\$6,000 DEP grant approved

The grant may be used for more than move-out such as citywide spring cleaning events or cleanouts with the elderly.

Vendor/partners are being sought. There is one group who may be able to go inside apartments to bring things outside but this would only be a last resort for people

who need accommodations. The goal is to pick up from the curb. However, Furnishing Hope does not want items exposed to the weather.

Free Store probably last weekend in May, either May 31 or June 1, location to be determined

Can we accommodate those just wanting to donate stuff?

Volunteer Program

- RAC members could serve as mentors to acclimate volunteers
- Volunteers might benefit from a goal such as helping reduce trash by a certain amount
- Volunteers would benefit from learning about the RAC and its history
- Volunteers would benefit from a simple handout including context and historical waste numbers to show progress.
- A 1-2 minute video could help onboard volunteers
- Outreach could be the default volunteer responsibility unless otherwise requested
- Explore the need for volunteers to focus on middle schools which need more help than elementary
- Multilingual volunteers could be beneficial to conduct face-to-face outreach
- More examination is needed before determining whether tagging bins and compost bin offers are the best use of volunteer time
- Consider soliciting volunteers by meeting them where they are, i.e., neighborhoods
- Tracie has robust volunteer program

Zero Waste Master Plan

Should be finalized by February

There may be another city council meeting on this subject in February or March

2025 RAC Goals

- **Free Store, Move-out waste, Compost program, and/or Other?**

More RAC free stores. Members spoke of a two times per year schedule such as May/June, August/September, and even possibly a special post-holiday version. The City could contribute towards rental costs and maybe the clean up.

Other ideas for 2025 goals include:

- Reusable grocery bags: explore fee effectiveness, handing out bags at grocery stores
- Strengthen relationships with Cambridge universities
- Mobile recycling center to increase convenience
- Explore viability of collaborating with the Office of Sustainability, climate change committee, Cambridge Energy Alliance
- Discuss interest in exploring a new name for the RAC.
- Explore viability and appropriateness of focusing on tetra pack recycling, medicine bottles, and cartons
- Take a bird's eye view of hard-to-recycle items
- Determine if the RAC wants to explore special collection programs for recyclable items too small for the Casella plant (toothpaste tubes, cosmetics) or specialty items (Brita)
- Focus on policy

Action Plan/Decisions

- Add policy to the next RAC agenda
- Reuse stores
- Invite the City's OOS to an RAC meeting
- Volunteer program development

Chat

08:21:14 From Carlie to Everyone:

I'm also happy to help!

08:21:26 From Carlie to Everyone:

(With volunteers)

08:21:40 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

I would like to help too - and be at the kick off meeting too and share my volunteer experiences

08:21:46 From Amy W to Everyone:

I'm happy to help with volunteers! Amy W

08:22:24 From Diane Roseman (she/hers) to Everyone:

Happy to help as well

08:22:38 From Diane Roseman (she/hers) to Everyone:

Elka hang with different friends

08:22:49 From Emily Lee to Everyone:

Reacted to "Elka hang with diffe..." with 😂

08:22:55 From Diane Roseman (she/hers) to Everyone:

Reacted to Elka hang with diffe... with "😂"

08:22:58 From Diane Roseman (she/hers) to Everyone:

Removed a 😂 reaction from "Elka hang with diffe..."

08:23:13 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

Reacted to "Elka hang with diffe..." with 😂

08:23:54 From Emily Lee to Everyone:

Happy to help as well!

08:23:59 From Elka to Everyone:

I'm willing to help

08:25:27 From Carlie to Everyone:

Reacted to "Elka hang with diffe..." with 😂

08:26:08 From Carlie to Everyone:

lol unless you can watch the video on 2x speed...

08:26:16 From Emily Lee to Everyone:

Reacted to "lol unless you can w..." with 😂

08:26:24 From Dawn Quirk to Everyone:

Replying to "lol unless you can w..."

True!

08:27:39 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

wise to not overcommit... but maybe do a small kickoff with a dozen possible volunteers and a few of us talking to them.. and then repeat that a few months on with a larger group?

08:29:25 From Tamene Tedla to Everyone:

Yes, I'm happy to volunteer

08:31:57 From Amy W to Everyone:

It would help in volunteering to have an inspiring city goal of reducing trash to less than 2 lbs/week - zero trash now! And encouraging people to help find solutions for remaining trash.

08:32:19 From traciegordon to Everyone:

Reacted to "It would help in vol..." with 🙌

08:32:41 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

i like Amy's idea: think of a goal we can talk about at the kickoff and use that to inspire vols

08:33:58 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

to Elka's point: at kickoff, We can talk about cafeteria as one place for people to volunteer. And say how much fun it is 😊

08:34:00 From Stephanie Wasiuk to Everyone:

Getting volunteers for the schools may also be tough based on days of week/timing. Some of the events we table at for compost/recycling are at easier times for folks who have a 9-5

08:34:22 From Carlie to Everyone:

Reacted to "Getting volunteers f..." with 👍

08:36:49 From Stephanie Wasiuk to Everyone:

In addition to the language question, maybe ask volunteers if there's some sort of community group they're connected to

08:37:10 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Reacted to "In addition to the l..." with 👍

08:37:58 From Elka to Everyone:

good point Debby! Like the idea of getting middle schoolers supporting their peers.

08:38:26 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

Reacted to "good point Debby! L..." with 

08:41:02 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

maybe think of vol kickoff event as a time where we help people find their sweet spot as vols? Maybe each of us vols there do a couple minutes 1:1 with each person.. a teeny counseling session: what do you love doing elsewhere in life? what motivates you to vol with RAC? etc. But do it there/then

08:41:25 From Amy W to Everyone:

Bin tagging might be more effective if done consistently. I have done a lot, but only sporadically. I did essentially all of Tues. area, but only sections of other areas. sporadically.


08:42:27 From Amy W to Everyone:

Will we get to see a revision of the ZWMP prior to it going to the City council?

08:42:36 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

also.. do more bin tagging if we find a couple vols who really want to do it. in fact, maybe we fine tune our goals a bit based on what we have vols to do.

08:45:40 From Quinten Steenhuis to Everyone:

Reacted to also.. do more bin t... with ""

08:46:01 From Amy W to Everyone:

Great to hear those 2 are potential PB options!!

08:46:35 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

i also like the idea of doing Free Store May and Aug.. IF we can find the vols/energy to do it.

08:47:27 From Amy W to Everyone:

Go Tracie! PB is a significant commitment, thanks!

08:47:47 From Tamene Tedla to Everyone:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/10hGb8gxt_-u_2N4g25v2hMDWX0xzLi-A](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/10hGb8gxt_-u_2N4g25v2hMDWX0xzLi-A....)
Sure! Here's a more concise version of the note:

Here I'd like to share my study abroad experience in Morocco, where I saw how volunteer opportunities strengthened ties between schools, students, and the community. I believe this insight will help us as we work to implement a Volunteer Match service that fosters stronger connections between campuses, students, and the city.

Looking forward to discussing ideas!

08:47:55 From traciegordon to Everyone:

Reacted to "Go Tracie! PB is a ..." with 👍

08:48:20 From Stephanie Wasiuk to Everyone:

Would be happy to help this year since I was away last year - two Free Stores would also give more flexibility for people to volunteer

08:49:45 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

I'm hoping the mobile recycling also gets votes!

08:50:03 From Deborah Galef to Everyone:

Reacted to "I'm hoping the mobil..." with 👍

08:50:10 From Quinten Steenhuis to Everyone:

Winter is a great time post holidays, especially for fabulous with kids

08:50:11 From Stephanie Wasiuk to Everyone:

Reacted to "Winter is a great ti..." with 👍

08:50:13 From Stephanie Wasiuk to Everyone:

Removed a 👍 reaction from "Winter is a great ti..."

08:50:17 From Stephanie Wasiuk to Everyone:

Reacted to "I'm hoping the mobil..." with 👍

08:52:19 From Elka to Everyone:

Reacted to "I'm hoping the mobil..." with 👍

08:53:00 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

to Debby's point about BYO Bag... maybe a few of us could talk about doing that again.. not as a major RAC project but a side line.. Again, we might mention that at a kickoff for vols.. maybe find 1 or 2 eager folks?

08:55:55 From Carlie to Everyone:

I really like Emily's idea!

08:56:07 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

Reacted to "I really like Emily'..." with 👍

08:56:18 From Elka to Everyone:

Reacted to "I really like Emily'..." with 👍

08:56:21 From Carlie to Everyone:

Especially as a former college sustainability group member... I would have loved to get involved with the local community more!

08:57:21 From Emily Lee to Everyone:

Reacted to "Especially as a form..." with ❤️

08:57:36 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

i like Debby G's idea of giving out bags.. Remember the big push we did years ago? WE collected 100s of bags. People loved being able to donate them.. maybe that's a way to pull in more vols?

08:57:49 From Stephanie Wasiuk to Everyone:

Reacted to "i like Debby G's ide..." with !!

08:58:03 From Debby Knight to Everyone:

I went into a grocery store in

08:59:13 From Debby Knight to Everyone:

Watertown (I think Stop and Shop) and they had a sandwich board at both entrances reminding shoppers to bring in their own bags. Probably catches all those folks that forget their bags in their car every time!

09:01:09 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

Reacted to "Watertown (I think S..." with 👍

09:01:35 From Tamene Tedla to Everyone:

No I give the Google Drive access and please see the link

09:01:50 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Reacted to "Watertown (I think S..." with 👍

09:02:43 From traciegordon to Everyone:

Go to the message area in Chat. The highlighted blue area, make sure you highlight Meeting Group Chat.

09:09:05 From Amy W to Everyone:

Cities, local government, and individual responsibility may be our only way to combat climate change and environmental concerns under the incoming administration. Reducing food waste / composting / reducing trash is key in reducing Methane & Emissions. Recent studies show allarming melting at the poles which have us perilously close to AMOC tipping point - we are baking in the emissions now

that may push us over the edge. Citizens sense the urgency - but our city goals also need to define and reflect the urgency. Our stated goals are still looking at 2050 to reduce trash by only 80% - that would be devastating! Could we fix this?

09:11:06 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

or.. zero waste Advisory committee?

09:11:18 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

I've been keen on exploring if the City can "host" TerraCycle boxes to collect things like dental supplies waste, pens, MLP, etc.

09:11:31 From Emily Lee to Everyone:

I like the idea of Waste Reduction Action Committee

09:12:31 From Amy W to Everyone:

I have found the collaborations incredibly helpful during outreach! The people that are already composting get enthusiastic about new programs such as Storm Drain stewardship - when they cannot be there to outreach.

09:12:41 From Stephanie Wasiuk to Everyone:

Replying to "I've been keen on ex..."

What's the overall perception of TerraCycle? Last time I checked, they were very secretive about how they were "recycling" everything they collect. Has that changed?

09:13:04 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

hmm... zero waste is a newish term.. compared to recycling, which we've all been saying for decades.. so ZW might grab some attention.

09:13:08 From Stephanie Wasiuk to Everyone:

Reacted to "I have found the col..." with 👍

09:13:26 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Also, I really, really, really hate throwing tetrapak cartons in the trash, and would love to work on seeing if we can get collection boxes for that too.

09:13:28 From Carlie to Everyone:

It could be good to have a meeting together post zero waste action plan

09:13:53 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

Reacted to "It could be good to ..." with 👍

09:14:36 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

I vote for Camb Energy Alliance

09:14:37 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

reach out to both of them, Mike, and see who responds!

09:15:00 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Reacted to "It could be good to ..." with 👍

09:15:04 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

let's invite Julie to a rac meeting

09:15:54 From Amy W to Everyone:

Reacted to "Also, I really, re..." with 🍌

09:18:56 From Dailey Brannin to Everyone:

We've moved away from it for the same reasons - and they're usually energy-intensive things to separate/process (IF they're getting processed)

09:19:20 From Stephanie Wasiuk to Everyone:

Reacted to "We've moved away fro..." with 👍

09:19:56 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Thanks Emily - will check out.

09:20:20 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

a thought on all of this about Terra etc and the less recyclable items: Maybe a couple of us could work with Mike to decide on an actual RAC policy about these items?

09:20:31 From Stephanie Wasiuk to Everyone:

Reacted to "a thought on all of ..." with 👍

09:21:09 From Emily Lee to Everyone:

Replying to "I've been keen on ex..."

I remember back in the day we wanted to team up on this. After visiting Casella's MRF and reading more into TerraCycle's practices or lack thereof, I am less enthused about TerraCycle. Basically there isn't demand for some of these miscellaneous materials, and they end up sitting in warehouses waiting for someone to want to use them. YES! Your Eco Source store in Arlington supposedly collects some of these items (I need to call to confirm) and TerraCycle's website does list individual collectors, but Ulta in Watertown, L'Occitane, and Sephora (need to confirm the one in Cambridgeside Galeria) are

part of Pact Collective which collects toothpaste tubes, floss containers, small cosmetics containers (you will need to clean them out though).

09:21:39 From Stephanie Wasiuk to Everyone:

Reacted to "I remember back in t..." with 👍

09:21:42 From traciegordon to Everyone:

Reacted to "I remember back in t..." with 👍

09:22:44 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

terra etc.: I'm thinking we might focus on the other end: encourage toothpaste makers to think of other options? Oh.. Rob is saying the same thing.

09:23:32 From Amy W to Everyone:

Replying to "I've been keen on ..."

A city in mass recently implemented public recycling disposal for cigarette waste - which also helps keep them from washing down the storm drains into the water ways - which is a top issue. It may have been through terecycle.

09:24:56 From Dawn Quirk to Everyone:

I second medication bottle! How is that 2025 and there are no takeback programs for medicaton containers?

09:25:08 From Stephanie Wasiuk to Everyone:

Reacted to "I second medication ..." with !!

09:25:09 From Tamene Tedla to Everyone:

Do we have any recycling tour for this year? If so, I believe we should encourage school club leaders.

09:25:10 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Tracie can you check what company makes them and call them to ask?

09:25:31 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Reacted to "Do we have any recyc..." with 👍

09:25:42 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

Dawn I'm with you.. There WAS one in Cincinnati, some religious group, but it died in Covid.. Maybe we can find another one?

09:25:48 From Dawn Quirk to Everyone:

I would love the RAC to write a letter to the pharma on this . Take back medication bottles.

09:25:58 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

Reacted to "I would love the RAC..." with 👍

09:26:01 From Dawn Quirk to Everyone:

Reacted to "Dawn I'm with you.. ..." with 👍

09:26:01 From traciegordon to Everyone:

Reacted to "Tracie can you check..." with 👍

09:26:16 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Reacted to "I would love the RAC..." with 👍

09:27:12 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

I second Elka's "future conv" on policy request!

09:27:23 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

or get pharma to use recyclable bottles.. or get Casella to think how to recycle small items? Maybe various ways to address this?

09:27:24 From Rob Vandenabeele to Everyone:

The best case scenario for collecting hard to recycle materials is finding creative reuse options for them.

09:27:30 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

Reacted to "The best case scenar..." with 👍

09:27:40 From Dawn Quirk to Everyone:

Reacted to "or get pharma to use..." with 👍

09:27:52 From Emily Lee to Everyone:

Reacted to "The best case scenar..." with ❤️

09:29:34 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Replying to "The best case scenar..."

How to reuse toothpaste tubes?!

09:31:58 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Replying to "The best case scenar..."

Thanks Mike and everyone!