

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting

April 8, 2026, 8:00am – 9:30am

Minute Taker: Emily Lee

Remote Meeting

Members Present: Olufolakemi Alalade, Dailey Brannin, Tucker Dammin, Debby Galef, Brian Goldberg, Tracie Gordon, Eric Herman, Sugandha Karmacharya, Debby Knight, Elka Kuhlman, Emily Lee, Richard Nurse, Carlie Peters, Ashan Rodriguez, Suzanne Shaw, Meera Singh, Helen Snively, Rob Vandenbeelee, Stephanie Wasiuk, Monica Yudron, Ting Zhang, Jenna Zwanger

Members Absent: Dave Demme, Tian Feng

Staff present: Mike Orr

Public Present: Courtney Forrester, Tamene Tedla, Amy Waltz

1. Housekeeping, 8:00am

Vote on March 2026 Minutes - approved

2. City Updates

First Mobile Recycle Center: April 22 at Tobin School, 4-7:30pm

- 2nd event: May 20 at former Kennedy Longfellow School (near 104 Fulkerson St)
- Outreach events upcoming
 - April 18 - Earth Day at Main Library: Finished Compost giveaway
 - Fix-It Clinic on May 9; anyone interested in volunteering for it?
 - Harvard is hosting Fix-It Clinic on April 15 (<https://sustainable.harvard.edu/event/fixit-clinic-2/>)
- Casella tour debrief
 - Great to see inner workings, very high tech and efficient: cameras, blowing air to sort
 - Helps to better understand what can be recycled
 - Most likely anything smaller than the palm of your hand will get trashed
 - Learned that bottle caps are trashed unless kept on container
 - Small pieces of paper like shredded paper are hard to recycle because will just fall through cracks. Instead, bring to shredding event.
 - Shredding lowers quality of paper fibers, so only shred if you need to
 - Goal isn't to have perfect sorting but to simplify and encourage people to recycle
 - Find myself throwing away more rather than trying to put everything in recycle bin
 - Helps to be able to describe what happens to our recycling
 - Employees were very passionate about doing it right and cared
 - Good job opportunities for people that want experience with mechanics and how to fix machines, Casella will pay for education and training
 - 2nd MRF (Materials Recovery Facility) option is Republic in Peabody. Ting did tour; has most up-to-date equipment

3. Letter to Commissioner: Review and vote on Rob's proposed letter to Commissioner John Nardone from RAC regarding ZWMP 2.0 implementation.

- Came out of desire to create urgency around food waste and other policies from ZWMP 2.0, we're already 1 year in!
- Rob met with various city councilors like Marc McGovern and Patty Nolan
- Patty wants us to come to Health and Environment committee
- Voted to send letter with minor amendments

4. Breakout rooms to discuss interests and think about goals for the RAC

- Goal: Do people feel like they want to form sub-committees to meet outside of RAC meetings? Is there a topic that jumps to the top of peoples' interests?
- From last months' PPT: I forgot to add this awesome map that the RAC created:
<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?ll=42.37819667686885%2C-71.18875086655196&z=12&mid=1OrWa1xjXqBq8fN5KCYtSidJI0aQSXfs>
 - 97,000 views since publishing in September 2023.
- Breakout into 3 "virtual" rooms. Potential rooms: Reduce & Reuse, Food Waste Diversion, Community Outreach, Encouraging diversion of other items (textiles, e-waste), Restaurant reduce/reuse.
 - Restaurant Reduce/Reuse
 - Have a conversation with restaurants to understand what their waste diversion needs are and what their barriers to change are, create the sense that they are part of the community's efforts to implement the ZWMP
 - We as customers can impart changes like encouraging businesses not to use black plastic take-out boxes (maybe restaurants don't know they're not recyclable; also not good for health), making ordering websites default to not including utensils unless opt in
 - Other ideas
 - Incentivizing with a decal/certification advertising that they are meeting certain zero waste standards.
 - What if restaurants charge for take-out containers similar to bag tax or offer to put food in our own containers?
 - Food Waste Diversion
 - Focus on bigger residential buildings
 - Some big residential buildings have already rolled out collection. Speak with building managers to understand how they've been implemented, so that when ordinance/mandate comes in, others will have more of a template to work off of
 - High resident turnover, important population to reach
 - Think about how to reward building managers
 - Community Outreach/Reduce & Reuse/Encouraging diversion of other items
 - Some overlap with food waste diversion
 - Long-term residents pretty clued-in; focus on transient population: think about communication channels (see what city uses; church communities could be an untapped avenue)
 - RAC members are allowed to meet outside of RAC meetings if it's less than 50% of RAC members (12 members or less)

5. Closing, 9:20am

- Public Comment
- Action Plan/Decisions
- Announcements
 - May 13 meeting will be Hybrid with preference for in-person. 8:00-8:45am, we will have a coffee meet and greet with Commissioner John Nardone & Deputy Commissioner Jennifer Mathews.

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](https://www.cambridgeMA.gov/Services/Recycling)

Upcoming Meetings

- May 13
- June 10
- September 9
- October 14
- November 18 (note the delay due to Veterans Day holiday)
- December 9

Chat:

2026-04-08 07:59:48 From read.ai meeting notes to Everyone:

Tamene added read.ai meeting notes to the meeting.

Read provides AI generated meeting summaries to make meetings more effective and efficient. View our Privacy Policy at <https://www.read.ai/pp>

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

2026-04-08 08:02:11 From Courtney L Forrester to Everyone:

but PP (#5) is not accepted with plastic film - which only wants #2 & #4

2026-04-08 08:03:17 From Mike Orr to Everyone:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XN9dqr9p89689F1rVmftg9fN6GAGcNQiqpgSCslwYbY/edit?tab=t.0>

2026-04-08 08:11:11 From Dailey Brannin to Everyone:

Fixit Clinic:
<https://sustainable.harvard.edu/event/fixit-clinic-2/>

2026-04-08 08:22:30 From Rob Vandenberg to Everyone:

And keep in mind that different MRFs have different capabilities due to the capital investment they can make in machinery.

2026-04-08 08:23:56 From Mike Orr to

Everyone:

MRF=recycling processing facility

2026-04-08 08:24:17 From Rob Vandenberg to Everyone:

Materials Recovery Facility

2026-04-08 08:24:32 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

MRF = materials recovery facility?

2026-04-08 08:27:10 From Amy Waltz to Everyone:

Earth day volunteers: this is an ideal opportunity to encourage people to sign up for the recycle newsletter for ongoing outreach. Deb made a QR code which makes sign up easy (many people in the car permit line were happy to sign up by QR code) . Susan suggested having the QR code on a lanyard for volunteers to wear with monthly recycle newsletter sign up.

2026-04-08 08:27:45 From Monica Yudron to Everyone:

Replying to "Earth day volunteers: this is an ideal opportunity ...":

Great idea!

2026-04-08 08:28:25 From Elka to Everyone:

Replying to "Earth day volunteers: this is an ideal opportunity ...":

agree!

2026-04-08 08:28:28 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Reg lanyards, pls save to reuse! We collect so many from various conferences - cant put in recycling!

2026-04-08 08:28:40 From Mike Orr to Everyone:

<https://www.wastedive.com/news/recycling-technology-advancements-black-rigid-plastic-packaging/759738/>

2026-04-08 08:29:54 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

THANK YOU Rob, for drafting this!

2026-04-08 08:30:29 From Suzanne shaw to Everyone:

Good letter, Rob!

2026-04-08 08:31:59 From Suzanne shaw to Everyone:

Let's vote today!

2026-04-08 08:32:11 From Carlie M Peters to Everyone:

Do we need a vote on if we should vote today...

2026-04-08 08:32:13 From Mike Orr to Everyone:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1RqpZRu7LqkaidoXrgE3YgELAMq9Ot4vb5Dsng4g8wY/edit?tab=t.0>

2026-04-08 08:32:18 From Carlie M Peters to Everyone:

Mike, can you do a poll?

2026-04-08 08:32:56 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

I vote for Vote today!

2026-04-08 08:33:02 From Richard Nurse to Everyone:

Vote today, Richard

2026-04-08 08:34:15 From Amy Waltz to Everyone:

Yes - I think that the initial time frame is crucial - This is already a year behind schedule. This would mean that the mandate for composting would be immediate - with enforcement of the mandate beginning soon.

2026-04-08 08:36:41 From Amy Waltz to Everyone:

The largest barrier to composting is lack of a collection receptacle for the building.

2026-04-08 08:39:12 From 'Folakemi to Everyone:

In favour

2026-04-08 08:40:00 From Debby Galef to Everyone:

Thank you, Rob.

2026-04-08 09:01:58 From Brian Goldberg to Everyone:

Apologies - I need to jump to a 9am meeting. Happy to speak further with Courtney and Daily regarding university role (I'm at MIT).

2026-04-08 09:19:16 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

Jenna--maybe you can connect with the group that Emily was in? that seems like the right place for the Go Green group you mentioned

Jenna Zwanger, Meera Singh: 👍

2026-04-08 09:30:44 From Dailey Brannin to Everyone:

<https://sustainable.harvard.edu/event/earth-day-2026/>

Subject: Request for Implementation of Zero Waste Master Plan 2.0 – Strategy #2

Dear Commissioner Nardone,

On behalf of the Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC), we write to respectfully request that the city quickly implement the Zero Waste Master Plan 2.0, published in March 2025 and formally adopted by the Cambridge City Council in June 2025.

As you know, the plan outlines an ambitious framework for building on Cambridge's many successes at waste management. Its key goals—reducing trash by 50% by 2030, improving sanitation and reducing rodent activity, minimizing environmental impacts by diverting waste from trash disposal, and making programs equitable and accessible—reflect both community priorities and urgent environmental needs.

We believe that meaningful progress toward these goals can begin immediately through action on short-term strategies identified for implementation within the next one to three years. In particular, strategy #2—requiring food waste diversion for all residential and commercial buildings—represents a critical and achievable step forward.

Based on DPW's 2025 trash audit, food waste remains a significant portion of the city's trash stream (35%) and contributes to sanitation challenges, including rodent activity. A citywide requirement for food waste diversion would not only reduce the volume of trash sent for disposal but also improve public health conditions and support Cambridge's climate and sustainability commitments.

To ensure that this initiative succeeds, we strongly encourage the Department of Public Works (DPW) to include an education and outreach plan. Clear guidance and support for residents, property managers, and businesses will be essential to achieving high participation rates and long-term compliance.

The RAC stands ready to support the DPW in this effort through public engagement, policy feedback, and collaboration on outreach strategies. We are confident that with decisive action, Cambridge can continue to make significant strides toward its zero-waste goals.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further.

Sincerely,
Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee