

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes

June 10, 2026, 8:00am – 9:30am

Hybrid Meeting

Minute Taker: Tian Feng

Members Present: Olufolakemi Alalade, Dailey Brannin, Tian Feng, Debby Galef, Tracie Gordon, Sugandha Karmacharya, Debby Knight, Elka Kuhlman, Emily Lee, Carlie Peters, Suzanne Shaw, Meera Singh, Helen Snively, Rob Vandenbeelee, Stephanie Wasiuk, Ting Zhang, Jenna Zwanger

Members Absent: Tucker Dammin, Brian Goldberg, Eric Herman, Richard Nurse, Ashan Rodriguez, Monica Yudron

Staff present: John Fitzgerald, Lena Johnson, Mike Orr

Public Present: Courtney Forrester, Tamene Tedla, Amy Waltz

1. Housekeeping

- May 2026 minutes passed
- Dave Demme has stepped down from the RAC.
- Motion to assign Tian Feng as Co-Chair of RAC passed
- Reviewed RAC Face Book, reminder to take a look and add your entry if you haven't:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XN9dqr9p89689F1rVmTg9fN6GAGcNQiqpgSCslwYbY/edit?tab=t.0>

2. Discussion

- Free Store:
 - Locked down a space at Reservoir Church on Aug 22 (timing TBD, likely 11-2) – lots of parking and space
 - Upcoming subcommittee meetings, will collect interest in next few weeks (will plan to meet biweekly 8am Wed time) - Helen and Emily in charge
 - Need attention to raise awareness in neighborhood, including advertising at library and school, potentially physical canvassing to post signage / door knockers with volunteers
 - Lena running point for Free Store in Mike's absence for materials disposition after free store
 - Tracie also organizing separate Free Store at St Pauls Church in Harvard Sq. for a Saturday this summer
 - Mike / Lena to add to city calendar and monthly newsletter
 - Mike is working with Camb Public School Dept for potential spaces if Reservoir Church does not work
- Ordinance has yet to pass City Council vote
 - Tabled at Jun 1 and Jun 8 meetings; next meeting is Jun 22 (if tabled again, likely picked up after summer)
 - Mike speaking with two business groups who had voiced concerns
 - Last ordinance change was 1991, so it really needs updating
 - 90 businesses already separating food waste; case studies indicate only limited incremental costs and really positive results on limiting rodent problems
 - Members welcome to attend and speak on their own behalf to contact City Council to urge passage
- Sub-committee report-outs and next steps
 - Commercial waste reduction (focus on retail/restaurants)
 - Stephanie, Emily, Monica, Amy, Elka, Tracie
 - Want to do case study of local businesses to understand challenges and concerns: packaging, food waste collection, etc.
 - Challenges may be different for local vs national chains - maybe focus on former

- Members reaching out to local businesses to ask questions
- May also study one of 90 businesses that have already made the change
 - Lamplighter, Life Alive
 - Dumpling House got rid of rat problem by working with local apartment building
- Idea: Consumer video that highlights positive reaction to food waste diversion
- RecyclingWorks: provides technical assistance on reducing waste for any commercial entity - could be very helpful
- Food Waste Reduction & Diversion
 - Suzanne, Amy, Rob, Tracie
 - Focus on 50+ building, biggest bang for our buck
 - Points to highlight: Keeping trash chute clean, overall sanitation in building (odor, rodents), ways city can help get started
 - Estimated 80 of 160 large buildings already diverting food waste
 - Best to wait until after ordinance has been approved, so kickoff in Sept.; there'll also be new tenants
 - RAC members to staff events to outreach residents
 - Work with property managers in September - create fact sheet
- Proposal to dedicate time in September to break out during main meeting
- After end of June and clarity on policy ordinance, Suzanne to organize 2 subcommittee (commercial waste / food waste) meetings in summer to bridge gap in RAC meetings
- Regardless of ordinance, still room for more adherence or improved practices
 - Emphasize rats when talking with others
 - Big influx of residents at end of May and beginning of September
- Mobile recycling center has been going well, but looking for ideas on how to spread awareness in local neighborhoods
- Call out for recent Harvard events with good sorting and diversion
- Food waste bag distribution, at libraries, etc., winding down
 - Propose for participatory budget?

3. Closing

- No public comment
- Outreach events upcoming
 - Fresh Pond Day: Saturday June 13
 - Ports Arts Fest: Sunday June 14
 - Summer Family Fun Day: Saturday June 27
- Action Plan/Decisions
 - Review RAC Face Book and add your entry if you haven't
 - Free Store:
 - Respond to Emily's subcommittee meeting sign up if interested in helping
 - Mike / Lena to add to city calendar and monthly newsletter
 - Mike to share city hearing DPW ppt with RAC
 - Share topic requests with Mike and Tracie, for her upcoming city manager / mayor meeting
 - Mike to make sure newsletter sign up form is working
 - Sign up to volunteer at upcoming outreach events if available
 - Reach out to Carlie about attending and organizing Summer Social
 - Mike to send out doodle to find a date

Chat: