

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting

March 11, 2026, 8:00am – 9:30am

Minute Taker: Helen Snively

Remote Meeting

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

Members Absent: Dave Demme, Ashan Rodriguez, Ting Zhang

Staff present: Lena Johnson, Mike Orr

Public Present: Courtney Forrester, Tamene Tedla, Amy Waltz

1. Housekeeping

- Vote on February 2026 Minutes. Minutes passed
- Mike reminds us we are seeking an additional co-chair, starting at the April meeting. Please email him.

2. City Updates

- **First Mobile Recycle Center: April 22 at Tobin School, 4-7:30pm.** This will be like the DPW drop-off center, but at various locations, rotating monthly around the city, spring through fall. On May 20, the van/truck will be in East Cambridge. PB funding to continue for 3 years. DPW staff will handle it, no need for RAC volunteers. But we can come watch! Lots of ideas on how to publicize: backpack express, city outlets, Nextdoor, churches
- Upcoming outreach events:
 - Parking Registration at City Hall Annex.
 - Earth Day at Main Library: April 18. Finished Compost giveaway (Fix-It Clinic at a later date)
- New Solid Waste Program Manager: Lena Johnson; brief introduction and role as Zero Waste Ambassador coordinator. She's replacing Camilla Elvis, who's now in Boston.
- Tours of facilities: About 15 people max per tour
 - Casella recycling processing in Charlestown: March 26, 8:30-11am; this facility is 4th largest MRF in US
 - Greater Lawrence Sanitary District (GLSD) in North Andover: May 5, 8:30am-12pm
 - CORE, Charlestown, May 12, 8.30 to 11.30; our food scraps go here, where they're turned into a slurry, and then trucked to GLSD

3. What has RAC worked on in the past and what are your thoughts for the future?

- Presentation from Mike on RAC's successes over the years, including lots of creative ideas, writing pieces for the monthly newsletter, different ways to think about using waste.
- Breakout into 3 "virtual" rooms and report out: Free Store, Food Waste Diversion, Community Outreach
- Free store group talked about community swaps/free stores. 3 of us are doing a handbook on how to do your own free store, will keep working on it, and ask for input. Can be one driveway or a community group or invite the city. It should take pressure off the annual one. Stress the need for core group to run it.
- Food waste group talked about behavior change, how to make it default for people to do it, messaging about rats, climate change. Do more research on what's most effective, thus where to focus our efforts.
- Community Outreach. A huge topic! 4 prongs: commercial, residential, religious, non profit. 40% of residents are hooked in. How do we get to others? Partner with existing orgs. Contact property managers. Create tool kit for champions of food waste, etc. How to have productive conversations with

people who are not engaged? Reach out to restaurants, how they can do recycle/composting. Work with community centers to do a better job—bring recycling resources to events. Incentives to get people more interested. Make recycling a default if you live in Cambridge.

4. Closing

- No Public Comment
- Action Plan/Decisions All of us do research on behavior change. Sign up to volunteer for parking permit season and Earth Day. Think of guests we'd like to hear from to invite to RAC meetings.

Meeting Minutes are located online here: CambridgeMA.Gov/Services/Recycling

Upcoming Meetings

- April 8
- May 13
- June 10
- September 9
- October 14
- November 18?
- December 9

Chat:

2026-03-11 07:59:49 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.

2026-03-11 08:06:20 From Suzanne Shaw to Everyone:
apology, my video isn't working. Trying to fix

2026-03-11 08:07:09 From Carlie M Peters to Everyone:
He's sharing the agenda with city update notes, so nothing too exciting!

2026-03-11 08:14:35 From Amy Waltz to Everyone:
Word of mouth may be important for the mobile recycle center. It is a good opportunity to connect with online groups about 3Rs.

2026-03-11 08:15:04 From Meera Singh to Everyone:
Ive posted DPW recycling info on NextDoor - I think it's a good way to inform.

2026-03-11 08:15:57 From Carlie M Peters to Everyone:
Love that idea tian!

2026-03-11 08:16:48 From Tian Feng to Everyone:
Love that, Tracie — and the library bulletin board

2026-03-11 08:18:09 From Tracie Gordon to Everyone:
I agree Helen ...

2026-03-11 08:19:24 From Amy Waltz to Everyone:

Next door can have a large reach / or fall flat. Messages only reach a wide audience if many people like & comment. If other RAC members, or community members & like comment - social media messages will reach many more people.

2026-03-11 08:19:29 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Though I'm for the backpack express mode, I'm also thinking how much paper will be used in that.....

2026-03-11 08:20:23 From Suzanne Shaw to Everyone:

I wouldn't worry too much YET about too much promotion for the launch event.

2026-03-11 08:23:32 From Tracie Gordon to Everyone:

Even something we can post in the Buy Nothing Community..

2026-03-11 08:25:48 From Amy Waltz to Everyone:

Perhaps also including the DPW Recycle Center days/hours on fliers advertizing the Mobile Center will spread out the attendance, & boost participation in both.

2026-03-11 08:26:19 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

good point, Amy!

2026-03-11 08:27:54 From Monica Yudron to Everyone:

Will a volunteer sign-up form go out via email?

2026-03-11 08:28:17 From Meera Singh to Everyone:

Do they still keep compost bags at the libraries and City Hall? I have not seen in the past couple of times I've been at the main library and City Hall.

2026-03-11 08:29:54 From Tracie Gordon to Everyone:

Caveat to what Helen said. If you have an old broom or shovel you want to throw away. Hold onto it until Earth Day (compost day) and bring them there - WE CAN USE THEM, IN ANY CONDITION...

2026-03-11 08:30:27 From Tracie Gordon to Everyone:

I always bring a trolley and it gets used all day!

2026-03-11 08:31:23 From Tracie Gordon to Everyone:

I miss Camilla 

2026-03-11 08:31:50 From Tracie Gordon to Everyone:

Welcome Lena!

2026-03-11 08:31:58 From Dailey Brannin to Everyone:

Welcome Lena!!

2026-03-11 08:31:58 From Elka to Everyone:

mike can we stop sharing while Lena is speaking

2026-03-11 08:32:03 From Jenna to Everyone:

Replying to "Do they still keep compost bags at the libraries a...":

The main library does- you just have to ask at the desk and they will give you a role of them

2026-03-11 08:32:27 From Monica Yudron to Everyone:
Welcome Lena!

2026-03-11 08:32:31 From Lena Johnson to Everyone:
Thank you!!

2026-03-11 08:32:38 From Meera Singh to Everyone:
Replying to "Do they still keep compost bags at the libraries a...":
Thanks for LMK!

2026-03-11 08:32:40 From Eric Herman to Everyone:
Welcome!

2026-03-11 08:32:56 From Tracie Gordon to Everyone:
Nice!

2026-03-11 08:34:37 From Meera Singh to Everyone:
If we've been on that tour, can we sign up to go again? I think it's been upgraded since I went last.

2026-03-11 08:35:16 From Tucker Dammin to Everyone:
It's a great tour!

2026-03-11 08:37:12 From Monica Yudron to Everyone:
Congratulations!

2026-03-11 08:37:19 From Suzanne Shaw to Everyone:
Congratulations!!

2026-03-11 08:37:49 From Elka to Everyone:
Great news Mike!!!

2026-03-11 08:37:55 From 'Folakemi Alalade to Everyone:
Congrats Mike!

2026-03-11 08:38:08 From Meera Singh to Everyone:
I guess since the capacity for Casella is only 15, those who have been before prob shouldn't sign up to give new members a chance!

2026-03-11 08:38:28 From Debby Galef to Everyone:
Congratulations! That's wonderful!

2026-03-11 08:39:15 From Tracie Gordon to Everyone:
YAY! Congratulations!!!! 🙌❤️

2026-03-11 08:43:43 From Helen Snively to Everyone:
Martha Henry wrote wonderful pieces.. Can someone else do that too? (I'm a writing coach-- could help you get started.)

2026-03-11 08:44:41 From Helen Snively to Everyone:
the trash sort is gross but a wonderful experience..

2026-03-11 08:48:40 From Suzanne Shaw to Everyone:
what is curbside tagging?

2026-03-11 08:49:28 From Suzanne Shaw to Everyone:
*curbside bin tagging

2026-03-11 08:49:39 From Emily Lee to Everyone:
Replying to "what is curbside tagging?":
The time I did curbside tagging it was to encourage composting, so if we didn't see a compost bin out next to the trash bins, we would put a tag on the trash bin promoting the city's composting services. We went out on each area's trash day to tag bins.

2026-03-11 08:50:12 From Tracie Gordon to Everyone:
Suzanne, hello, Meryl, takes a few of use around to different neighborhoods and we identify bins that are supposed to be recycle or comost bins and they have the incorrect items in them and we tag them.

2026-03-11 08:50:25 From Tracie Gordon to Everyone:
Replying to "what is curbside tagging?":
Emily typersd faster (lol)

2026-03-11 08:51:12 From Tracie Gordon to Everyone:
Replying to "what is curbside tagging?":
We have sticky notes we place on the bins.

2026-03-11 09:01:00 From Monica Yudron to Everyone:
I took that to the annual meeting in my building and started a conversation about it!

2026-03-11 09:01:26 From Monica Yudron to Everyone:
People are still worried about compost + rats but the materials from the city are great resources for conversations!!

2026-03-11 09:01:53 From Mike Orr to Everyone:
I'm hoping to the next room. great stuff!

2026-03-11 09:10:44 From Mike Orr to Everyone:
I'm hopping to the next room. great stuff! 6 more minutes

2026-03-11 09:11:57 From Brian Goldberg to Everyone:
<https://www.openspace.mit.edu/calendar/swap-kids-clothing-toy-exchange>
<https://www.openspace.mit.edu/calendar/swap-adult-clothing-exchange>
<https://www.openspace.mit.edu/calendar/swap-plants-seeds>

2026-03-11 09:20:37 From Richard Nurse to Everyone:
Mike, Can I have a breif phone call with you after the meeting?

2026-03-11 09:20:49 From Richard Nurse to Everyone:
Richard 617 899 7665

2026-03-11 09:28:32 From Tracie Gordon to Everyone:
I despise taking notes... I will, though, when you get desperate.

2026-03-11 09:29:21 From Tian Feng to Everyone:
<https://media-publications.bcg.com/Nudging-the-loop-closed.pdf>

2026-03-11 09:29:38 From Tian Feng to Everyone:
We published a piece with Prof Cass Sunstein on behavioral change for circularity

2026-03-11 09:29:43 From Amy Waltz to Everyone:
General announcement: 11th Hour Climate/Environment Standout
This Wed. 3/11 at 6:00 PM
At Corner of Mass Ave & Church St, Harvard Sq.
If anyone wants to join in music folks rehearse at 5:30 in the UU First Church before the stand
out.
Folks are welcome to bring signs if they wish.
This is a Monthly event on the 11th of each month.

2026-03-11 09:29:50 From Monica Yudron to Everyone:
Awesome! Thanks, Tian!

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC)



Photo from 2024

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC)

- Established in 1991, after recycling in Cambridge began in 1989 with a few volunteers
- The RAC is a volunteer committee which provides advice, recommendations, and assistance to the Department of Public Works (DPW) regarding recycling, composting, reuse, and waste reduction. The RAC does this through research, feedback, public outreach, and event planning.
- The RAC has helped the city implement and advise on the Zero Waste Master Plan, curbside composting, Free Stores & Fix-It Clinics, marketing and education, and other important initiatives that have made Cambridge a national leader in waste reduction.

Collaboration with Arts Council: Art and Reuse

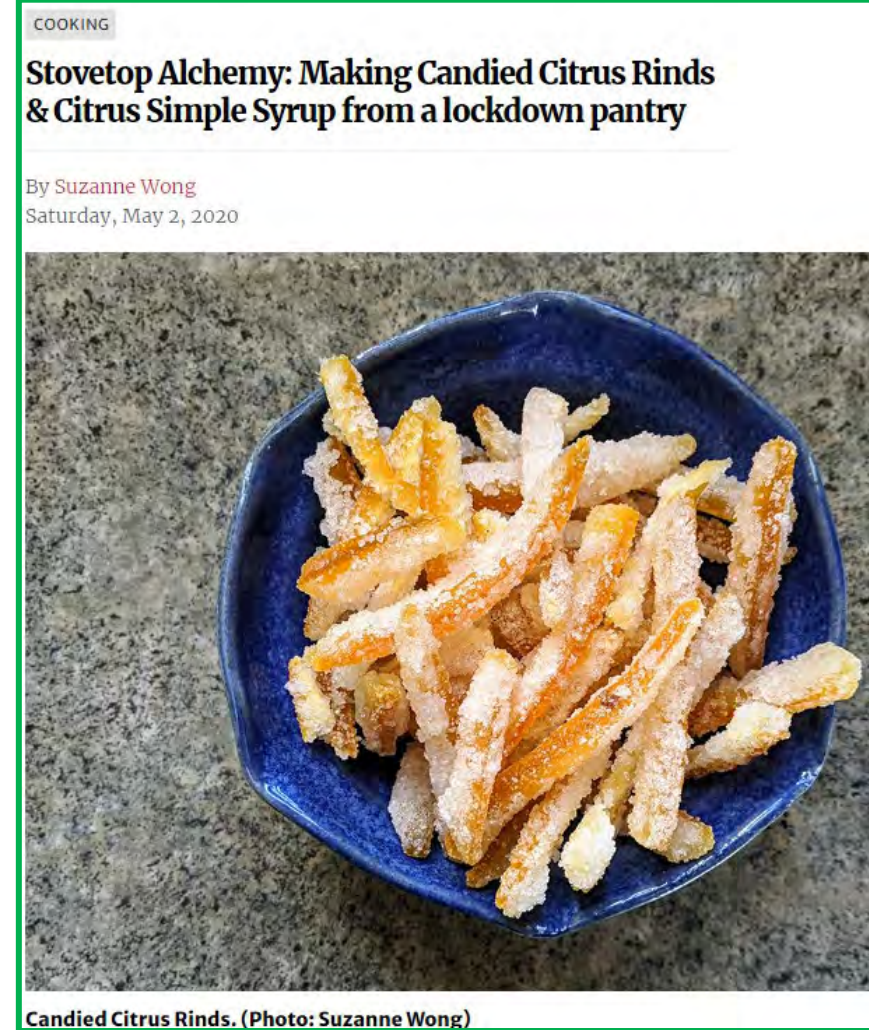
- Electrical Department was retrofitting street lamps. DPW wanted to find a creative way to reuse street lamp covers
- Mary Verhage and Cambridge Arts had been in conversation about how artists might incorporate discarded materials in their creations.
- Cambridge artist Andy Graydon turned the plastic light covers into a collection of drums that all museum visitors are welcome to play.



[“City Lights Orchestra”](#)—was on view at the DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in 2019-2020

RAC Highlights (2020)

- “Rehash It—Don’t Trash It” series on food waste reduction for monthly newsletter.



- Compost sub-committee had two articles published in Cambridge Day about food waste repurposing

RAC Issue #1

Newsletter

REHASH IT - DON'T TRASH IT
FOOD WASTE REDUCTION TIPS FROM THE RAC

REHASH SPOTLIGHT: BROCCOLI STEMS

Broccoli hailed as America's favorite vegetable, is more than just fluffy florets. A derivative of cabbage, broccoli is a mustard family member related to brussels sprouts, kale, cauliflower, and kohlrabi. Originating in the Mediterranean, it has been cultivated since Roman times and made its way to California in 1923. However, broccoli did not become a significant commercial crop in the U.S. until after World War II.

An excellent source of vitamins B1, B6, C, E, K, chromium, and folic acid, our favorite tree-like vegetable is also a good source of dietary fiber, pantothenic acid, manganese, phosphorus, choline, and so much more! Sadly, the nutritious stalks are often discarded. Stalks are not only tasty - more mild than sweet - they're also low calorie and offer more fiber than florets. With a little extra cooking time, stalks are a great addition to stir-frys, salads, soups, or sliced raw and dipped in your favorite dressings.

To prepare first cut the lower 1-2 inches, this section tends to be tough and woody. Remove the skin with a vegetable peeler; after a few passes, the pale green flesh is revealed. We're all about rehashing, so freeze those scraps for vegetable stock. Once peeled, the stalk can be sliced into thin rounds and enjoyed as is or added to your favorite dish.

No matter how you choose to enjoy stalks, this addition to your meal rotation is sure to please. By using florets for a separate meal, you can create two meals from a single broccoli purchase.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Hello Reader, we're the Recycling Advisory that forgotten box of pasta or grams we all have in

BROCCOLI

- 3 Pk
- Bro
- 5 ct
- 1 St
- 1 ct
- 1 lb
- 2 Pk
- 1/4
- 1/4
- 1/4
- Salt

In a n stems a tender. Sauté until c stalks a Using liquerly cup at a desired then all min.

Articles written by RAC

Friday, February 28, 2020

- Martha Henry has written 5 articles for Cambridge Day
- [30% reduction goal](#)
- [Textiles](#)
- [Christmas Trees](#)
- [Recycling Contamination](#)
- [Zero Waste Master Plan](#)



Cambridge has curbside recycling and composting in addition to trash pickup. (Photo: Martha Henry)

Cambridge residents have reduced the amount of trash they throw out by 20%



2020-2022





2023-
2025





2023-2025



Evolution of Finished Compost Giveaways



2022



2023



2024



2025

Evolution of Free Stores



2023



Apr. 2024



June 2025 Free Store

Other ideas for the RAC to consider

Help DPW in Zero Waste Master Plan (ZWMP) 2.0 Strategies. In particular:

- How to reduce move-out waste? Trash increases 15-20% on move-out weeks (late-May and around Sept. 1)
- Strategy #11: Host educational events and workshops on reduce & reuse topics.
 - Work with local organizations and residents to provide events and workshops related to zero waste, composting, clothing repair workshops, Fix-It Clinics, etc
- Strategy #15: Facilitate community-based programs to complement the City's efforts.
 - The RAC is an integral part of the City's outreach efforts and continued emphasis will be placed on their role in effective outreach, and the role of the general public in contributing to outreach efforts.
 - Regularly collaborate with the resident stakeholders to evaluate the impact of educational and communication plans around zero waste.
- Strategy #17: Increase access to waste diversion programs to residents that are less familiar with the programs and provide information in multiple languages. Most residents have a strong grasp of how to recycle. As the City's waste programs expand to include hard-to-recycle materials such as electronics, textiles, and metal, it's important to educate residents and property managers on how to use these programs.
 - Offer recycling training in different languages and/or provide interpreters.
 - Develop material with more visuals and fewer words to ensure that information is accessible.

Other ideas for the RAC to consider

- Outreach
 - Curbside bin-tagging
 - Spread the word on electronic forums
 - Zero Waste Cambridge FB group
 - NextDoor, neighborhood listservs.
 - Take over the [Cambridge Fixing & Repair FB group](#)
 - Attend major events (Mayfair, Fresh Pond Day, etc) or find a good location/event to table at.
 - Tips for Reduce/Reuse section of e-newsletter or for webpage

For context: Goals and focus areas voted on by RAC members for 2019:

1. Single use plastics
2. Compost (tied)
2. Citywide yard sale (tied)
4. Business recycling