

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes
November 2, 2022, 8:00am – 9:30am

Virtual Minute Taker: Audrey Ng

Members present: Leah Beckett, Debby Galef, Sakiko Isomichi, Susy Jones, Laura Nichols, Audrey Ng, Richard Nurse, Diane Roseman, Quinten Steenhuis, Mary Verhage

Members absent: Dailey Brannin, Holden Cookson, Shirley Elliott, Martha Henry, Debby Knight, Scott MacGrath, Janet Mosley, Meera Singh

Staff Present: Mike Orr

Public present: Helen Snively

1. Housekeeping, 8:00am (10 min)

- Vote on October Minutes - Approved
- If members need to leave meeting early they should post time in the chat

2. City Updates (15 min)

- Annual waste mailer arrived in mailboxes in late-October
 - Increase in requests for compost bins
- Waste Survey update
 - Survey proposed and developed by RAC subcommittee in 2020
 - Approximately 270 participants in the survey
 - Demographics were not representative - particularly by neighborhood and race/ ethnicity but were nevertheless helpful - would be incredibly expensive to obtain representative survey
- City conducted trash audit week of Oct 24
 - Contractor was VHB
 - Collected from about 125 households on Mon. and Thurs. collection routes, 1.25 tons from each
 - Results expected for December's RAC meeting
- Small Business Compost Pilot grew by 11 businesses, to 75 in total

3. Sub-committee topics (20 min)

- Sub-committee break-out
 - Textile Subco:
 - Textile Bin flier has been finalized
 - Mike will send to schools to include in newsletters
 - Next steps:
 - Metrics to measure impact - number of pickups at Helpsy bins, and requests for new bins at schools
 - Discuss more avenues to share or adapt this flier to reach more of the community
 - Food Waste:

- Mike gave us some existing resources for small businesses about food waste resources. May include new things like Too Good to GO and Chop Value (chopstick recycling)
- Questions for Mike: are most small restaurants subject to the food waste ban? Have restaurants already received the other 1-pagers from Recycling Works?
- We are going to review and pull out information we think is valuable into a google doc and work on it together before the next meeting.
- Outreach:
 - Point person in each neighborhood to contact neighbors - suggestion for spring?
 - New fridge magnets perhaps including a few key phrases rather than traditional icons

4. More discussion items (30 min)

- Finished compost giveaway Oct. 29
 - 15 cubic yards shared
- Press release on new waste ban items for 11/1/22
 - 600 clicks to Get Rid of it Right page as a result
 - Thorough media and news coverage of the ban
- Sign up to volunteer for outreach on election day
 - [Sign up sheet](#)
- Plastic recycling
 - Second most valuable recyclable commodity after aluminum
 - Reduction is key - majority of plastic material in our lives is not currently recyclable - i.e. headphones, clothing, packaging etc.
 - misleading Greenpeace article, magnified by NPR, saying plastics aren't recycled
 - Richard says future of plastics recycling, already begun in Europe, is basically recycling constituent chemicals and then reusing
- Food waste laws in CA, VT, and MA and their impact
 - [NYT Article](#)

5. Closing, 9:15am (15 min)

- Public Comment - None
- Action Plan/Decisions:
 - DPW presentation for local organizations
 - Discussion topics:
 - Reduced food packaging
 - Ways to engage landlords
 - Subcommittee actions items:
 - Textiles:
 - Follow up on release of Textile Bin Flier
 - Review any increases in pickups or new bin requests
 - Discuss other ways to publish flier

- Food Waste:
 - Review resources for small businesses addressing food waste
- Outreach:
 - Develop informational fridge magnet
- Announcements
 - On October 11 (10/11) Cambridge collected 10.11 tons of compost
 - Tonnage is increasing!
 - Compost your pumpkins and tell your neighbors to compost their pumpkins!

Chat:

08:01:08 From Mike Orr to Everyone:

Note that the expression of an opinion on matters within the body's jurisdiction to a quorum of a public body is a deliberation, even if no other public body member responds.

See page 6 of the Law online here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/open-meeting-law-guide-and-educational-materials-0/download>

08:15:10 From Sakiko Isomichi to Everyone:

I can attend till 9am

08:27:41 From Susy Jones to Everyone:

Even though the majority is a specific demographic, Sakiko/Mike, is there value in tracking some of the other demographics specific answers', or too small a sample?

08:28:53 From Susy Jones to Everyone:

And will you continue to get more people to fill out?

08:33:23 From Sakiko Isomichi to Everyone:

I think there is value in tracking some of the answers if they are interested in helping out on compost program

08:34:14 From Diane to Everyone:

is there any \$\$ from the city for free compost bags?

08:35:33 From Sakiko Isomichi to Everyone:

Who was the contractor for waste audit?

08:58:51 From Mike Orr to Everyone:

3 more minutes until we come back

09:03:35 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

15 cubic yards.. is each yard a ton??

09:05:10 From Mike Orr to Everyone:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1g4xf9Ya8MxhSsnOnf6OqXCsmUMlswqKJ2-3CT5d5exk/edit>

09:05:19 From Susy Jones to Everyone:

Food waste subcommittee

Mike gave us some existing resources for small businesses about food waste resources. May include new things like Too Good to GO and Chop Value (chop stick recycling.)

We have a couple questions for Mike: are most small restaurants subject to the food waste ban? Have restaurants already received the other 1-pagers from Recycling Works?

We are going to review and pull out information we think is valuable into a google doc and work on it together before next meeting.

09:07:11 From Deborah Galef to Everyone:

communications/outreach: point person in each neighborhood to contact neighbors - suggestion for spring? new fridge magnets perhaps including a few key phrases rather than traditional icons

09:10:48 From Audrey Ng to Everyone:

Textile Subco:

Textile Bin Flier is finalized

Mike will send to schools to include in newsletters

Next steps:

Metrics to measure impact - Number of pickups at Helpsy bins, and requests for new bins at schools

Discuss more avenues to share or adapt this flier to reach more of the community

09:13:09 From Susy Jones to Everyone:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/13/climate/global-food-waste-solutions.html>

09:13:43 From Susy Jones to Everyone:

California's law is the most ambitious in the United States. Grocery stores are required to donate to groups like Ms. Vang's "the maximum amount of edible food that would otherwise be

disposed,” or soon face fines. In addition, every city and county must reduce the organic waste that goes into landfills by 75 percent by 2025, and compost it instead.

09:17:19 From Susy Jones to Everyone:

Oops I forgot to confirm that Audrey is taking notes at the beginning!

09:17:36 From Audrey Ng to Everyone:

I got you

09:18:28 From Susy Jones to Everyone:

:) :)

09:19:11 From Susy Jones to Everyone:

Audrey has taken notes 2 months in a row - gold star! Here is the sign up for the rest of the year:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1pAd9fYlpNZVgC3_2kumtPnrsfa6JZbJ6dl6bOXD4Nps/edit?usp=sharing

09:19:20 From Quinten Steenhuis to Everyone:

Have a thought about targeted outreach to groups like <https://www.mothersoutfront.org/>

09:21:40 From Susy Jones to Everyone:

Good idea some branding that's like AD is climate action

Waste Survey Results

Weekly Trash bag usage

	Count
Less than 1	112
1	89
2	40
3	14
4	6

I recycle at home...

	Count
All the time	239
Most of the time.	24
Some of the time.	2
Rarely.	1

4. If you do not recycle all the time, why not?

	Count
I knew what items are accepted.	14

I was confident that everything gets recycled.	14
I had space in my home to keep my recyclables.	6
There was enough space in the cart for my recycling.	4
I felt I had time to recycle.	3
There were blue recycling carts at my building.	2

Which of the following services have you heard about or used?

Get Rid of It Right Tool

Count

I have used this service in the past year.	183
I have used this service, but not recently.	23
I have heard about it, but I haven't used it.	25
I have not heard about it.	35

Clothing/Textiles

Count

I have used this service in the past year.	131
I have used this service, but not recently.	12
I have heard about it, but I haven't used it.	88
I have not heard about it.	35

TV/Large appliance

Count

I have used this service in the past year.	57
I have used this service, but not recently.	73
I have heard about it, but I haven't used it.	91
I have not heard about it.	45

HHW

I have used this service in the past year.	71
I have used this service, but not recently.	93
I have heard about it, but I haven't used it.	84
I have not heard about it.	18

Recycle Center

I have used this service in the past year.	120
I have used this service, but not recently.	64
I have heard about it, but I haven't used it.	51
I have not heard about it.	32

7. What did you drop off at the recycle center? (out of 184)

Electronics	135
-------------	-----

Scrap metal	78
Plastic bags	74
Mercury items	64
non-alkaline batteries	53
Books	13
Cardboard	3

8. Have you tried composting at home?

Yes, I compost food scraps at my building with the City.	200
Yes, I compost in my yard.	16
Yes, I compost at a City drop-off location.	10
Yes, I compost food scraps at my building with a private collection service.	3
Yes, but I no longer compost at home.	9
No, I haven't tried composting yet.	17
No, I am not interested in composting right now.	11

9. What helped you get started composting? (Count: 210)

I received a kitchen bin from the City.	129
Mail from the City.	46
Email newsletter.	45
City website.	30
Information from a friend/neighbor.	26
I met a volunteer at an outreach event.	6
Outdoor sign or advertisement.	4
Information from my property manager/landlord.	3
None of the above/I don't remember.	15
Other	61

If other, please specify

Composted in last City we lived/ I grew up composting	12
City composting is much easier than yard composting	9
prior to curbside, I did drop-off composting	5
We had been composting privately for many years.	4
To help city with the rats	2
I grew up composting	3
reduce landfill	1
Receiving the new garbage cans and compost info from the city motivated me to evaluate our trash situation.	1
Rats in my yard compost after many years without them	2
Flier was attached to our trash bin. Had been meaning to participate for environmental reasons - the city system is convenient & sanitary.	1
Church	1
Cambridge made it easy to compost in an urban area.	1

10. What makes you want to keep composting? (Count: 210)

My food is not creating greenhouse gases in the landfill.	141
My food scraps are creating energy.	97
I am helping the City reduce waste disposal costs.	94
I have less trash	91
I am helping keep rodents away.	72
My trash doesn't smell anymore.	62
It is easier than composting in my yard.	43
I don't have to take out my trash as often.	29

If compost is not in your building, How far would you go to drop off food scraps? (Count: 10)

Less than 1/4 mile (less than 5-minute walk)	4
1/4 mile (5-minute walk)	1
1/2 mile (10-minute walk)	3
3/4 mile (15-minute walk)	1
1 mile (20-minute walk)	1

13. Why did you stop composting? (Count: 9)

My kitchen bin had fruit flies.	5
I ran out of compost bags.	4
Animals got in my cart.	3
Compost bags are too expensive.	3
My cart wasn't getting collected weekly.	1
My kitchen bin smelled bad.	1
I do not have room in my fridge to keep the bin so that there wouldn't be smell and fruit fly issues. Also skeptical of how compost was being recycled .	1
Have not restarted since city resumed curbside pick up post pandemic	1

14. What would get you to start composting again? (Count: 9)

If I got free compost bags.	5
If I had compost bags to line my curbside cart.	5
If the City improved collection.	2
If I knew how to keep my kitchen bin/curbside cart clean.	2
If I could use plastic bags.	2
Knowing that separate compost collection is back (It is!).	1
Encouraging landlords to clean the curbside carts	1

16. I haven't tried composting. How far would I walk to compost? (Count: 18)

Less than 1/4 mile (less than 5-minute walk)	6
1/4 mile (5-minute walk)	3
1/2 mile (10-minute walk)	0

3/4 mile (15-minute walk)	0
1 mile (20-minute walk)	0
I would not drop off food scraps.	8

17. If you don't want to compost now, why not? (Count: 28)

I am concerned about rodents.	11
I don't have composting at my building.	11
I am concerned about insects.	9
I am concerned about odors.	9
I don't produce much food waste.	9
I don't have room in my kitchen for a kitchen bin.	6
I use a garbage disposal instead.	6
I don't have room at my building for a curbside cart.	2

18. Tell us how you reduce waste.

I use cloth napkins and dishtowels instead of paper products.	248
I bring my own reusable bag.	243
I give away or donate clothes, shoes, and textiles (fabric).	238
I give away or donate books, toys, and household goods.	230
I bring my own water bottle.	196
I reduce food waste by using what I have and not buying more than I need.	181
I pack meals in reusable containers.	180
I try to repair clothing and/or household items.	178
I bring my own mug/thermos.	117
I buy/receive used items instead of buying new items.	106
None of the above.	3

19. In which neighborhood do you live?

1. East Cambridge	20
2. Area 2/MIT	0
3. Wellington-Harrington	13
4. The Port	10
5. Cambridgeport	41
6. Mid-Cambridge	36
7. Riverside	21
8. Baldwin	13
9. Neighborhood Nine	32
10. West Cambridge	25
11. North Cambridge	45
12. Cambridge Highlands	3
13. Strawberry Hill	7

20. How long have you lived there?

Less than 1 year	14
1 to 2 years	17
3 to 5 years	42
6 + years	193

21. How many units are in your building?

1 (single-family home)	69
2 to 3	123
4 to 6	29
7 to 12	14
More than 12	30

22. Do you rent or own your home?

Own	195
Rent	64

23. How many people live in your household?

1	72
2	109
3	37
4	38
5+	10

24. How old are you?

18 – 24	4
25 – 34	30
35 – 49	59
50 – 64	67
65+	92

25. What is your race or ethnicity?

White	221
African American	4
Asian	13
Black	5
Hispanic, Latinx or Spanish Origin	7
Middle Eastern or North African	4
More than one race/ethnicity	2
Prefer not to say	15

26. What is your highest level of education?

Associate degree or technical certificate	8
---	---

Bachelors Degree	48
Graduate, professional, or advanced studies	176
High school/GED degree	5
Prefer not to say	15
Some college	10

Are you currently a student?

Yes	6
No	240

What can the City do to help you reduce trash?

Collection services related

more HHW events	6
more options for e-waste drop-off	3
Maybe have more times the Recycle Center is open?	1
More public recycling bins	2
more shred days	1
year round YW collection	2
more recycling at Citywide events	1

Expand Items that are Recyclable

recycle cartons	6
Recycle styrofoam	2
Brita filters, wine corks, and smoke alarms	1
dog poop	1

Mandate reduced packaging for food	13
more plastic bag drop-off	7
Increase # of plastic/paper items that are recyclable (i.e. wrappers, other plastic bags, take-out items)	6
Encourage more bulk refill stores or options	2
Fight single use plastic	2
Tell me more precisely which plastic food containers can be recycled	3

BULKY WASTE

Provide a swap shop at the DPW	3
Have more options for reusable items.	2
reduce move-out waste	1
citywide yard sale	1
Charge money for waste pickup	1

OUTREACH-related

engage landlords/MF buildings	5
More outreach	2
more food waste reduction tips.	1
Reminders of benefits	1
In your newsletter have more tips on reducing waste	1

COMPOST-related

Provide composting bags	3
Compost pick-up at buildings with private trash collection	2
Stop throwing compost carts	1
offer free finished compost	1
Tell me how to control maggots in my bin	1

General Items

more compostable ware at businesses/schools	3
more compliance	2
EPR	1