

Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee
March 9, 2011, Meeting Minutes by Jason Zogg

Members Attending: Michael Arnott, Claire Davies, Jan Dillon, George Delegas, Debby Galef, Rob Gogan, Juliana Lyman, Adam Mitchell, Judy Nathans, Robert Winters, Jason Zogg

Guests Attending: Ted Live, Helen Snively

City Staff Attending: Meryl Brott, John Fitzgerald, Paulie Kelsey, Randi Mail, Lisa Peterson

The January minutes were approved unanimously.

Market & Tonnage Update

Randi shared update sent by Lisa in advance: big \$45/ton increase in news because mills running well and less material was getting to the curb because of snow. Plastics rising. No change for cardboard, glass, bi-metals (tin) and aluminum. Casella reports that Cambridge recycling loads are cleaner than they were before the switch to single stream! Randi believes that this is due to extensive public education and the new full color information printed on the lids of the new toters.

Tons recycled increased 10% month to month: Feb 2011 666 tons, up from 598 tons in Feb 2010.
Tons disposed decreased 5% month to month: Feb 2011 1075 tons, down from 1129 tons in Feb 2010 trash.
Note that tons disposed does not include multi-family buildings served by private haulers.

Question asked about payback timeframe for investment in single stream recycling toters. Randi said that conceptually, this would be based on how much tons recycled increases multiplied by avoided disposal costs per ton. The City spent about \$700,000 to purchase recycling toters for 1-5 unit residences (6+ unit buildings already had toters). A simplistic view would be that if the increase in tons recycled stays at about 10% (800 more tons/year) and disposal costs at \$90/ton, payback would be about 9 years. However, disposal fees will not stay the same, the rate of tons recycled will change, and other factors affect the "payback" period such as how reduced trash tons affect the costs of trash collection. In addition, MassDEP and Casella predict that single stream could increase tons recycled in Cambridge by up to 25%, and this potential was reflected in waste audit results showing a significant amount of paper, cardboard and containers still in the trash.

2010 Waste Audit

Randi shared the results from the two waste audits performed in the fall 2010 (before single stream). See the handout [online](#). Trash samples were collected from over 200 households and sorted out to discover the amount of curbside recycling (paper, cardboard, containers), drop-off recycling (scrap metal, textiles and electronics), organics (food scraps, dirty paper products) and discards.

When this data is annualized (45,000 households, 52 weeks), the results show that:

- 5800+ more tons of curbside recycling could be captured (24% of what is in the trash)
- 5900+ tons of organics could be composted (25% of what is in the trash)
- 1100+ more tons Drop-off recycling could be captured (5% of what is in the trash)

These results indicate that a 50% recycling rate could be possible with the existing curbside recycling program, including tons recycled of appliances, electronics, yard waste, drop-off materials, etc. In 2004, waste audit results also found that about 50% of all waste could be recycled.

Rob asked committee members to reconsider using the words “trash”, “waste” or “garbage”. Instead he suggested “discards”, “materials” or “resources”. This helps to shift thinking, because materials in are not waste until we waste them. Randi added that she has begun to shift to using the term “food scraps”, or “organics” instead of “food waste”.

Upcoming Events & Outreach

Randi provided a [working handout of 2011 events](#), great opportunities for recycling outreach. Anyone interested in volunteering at an event for a 2-3 hour shift should email recycle@cambridgema.gov. Efforts will include info tables with good visuals (possible a recycling outfit, pizza box as a hat, posters, etc), clipboard surveys in the crowd, announcements at meetings, etc. The focused messages this spring will be:

- Recycle new materials: empty pizza boxes, spiral cans, large rigid plastics, and empty paper coffee cups
- Commit to recycle at least 50% of your trash: residents, City Departments and community organizations

Members asked about the permitting process for special events and block parties and discussed ways to further integrate language about recycling and suggestions for waste prevention in the applications including:

- Require recycling collection at events that DPW does not work at
- Provide information on getting compostable serviceware (ex. [Ecocycle's Zero Waste kits](#))

The City defines a "special event" is one that is open to the general public. Find more information and links to the [special event permit applications online](#). A public event, depending on its size and nature, may require a number of permits from various City departments before it is officially approved.

Subcommittee Updates

Randi reminded members that committee recommendations and proposed activity should be geared to the Department of Public Works, and ultimately the City Manager.

Zero Waste Subcommittee

Jason gave an update, the [March minutes](#) are online. Discussion included:

- Ways to define and phrase zero waste
- Review that the City trash and recycling programs serve residential households and City buildings only. All businesses have private haulers. About 40% of multi-family residences get private trash collection.
- Possible topics: know composition of waste stream, diverting reusable / bulky items, extended producer responsibility, green procurement, deconstruction & building material reuse, composting
- Regular meetings will be held the 4th Wednesday of every month at 9am, at DPW

Business Subcommittee

Jan gave an update. The [February minutes](#) are online. Discussion included:

- City's mandatory recycling ordinance that applies to all buildings in Cambridge: if any material subject to state waste ban is more than 5% of a buildings trash, it must be recycled.
- City's new hauler license requirements implemented in 2010. All haulers must provide recycling services, also report which services are provided to their customers. 2011 reports indicate that about 35% of Cambridge businesses with private trash service do not appear to have a recycling hauler or use the Recycling Center
- Possible topics: how to prioritize technical assistance for non-recycling businesses, waste minimization, composting, purchasing power, incentives for recycling, working with other organizations Sustainable Business Network, Local First, Chamber of Commerce, Cambridge Energy Alliance, getting feedback from haulers on how to improve recycling

Outreach Subcommittee

First meeting scheduled for Friday March 25 at 9am at DPW, 147 Hampshire St.

General Announcements

- [How Portsmouth, New Hampshire Became an Ecomunicipality](#). 3/23,7:30 PM, Main Library

