

Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee

January 15, 2009

Minutes Taken by Cathy McCormick

Members Attending: Rob Gogan, Harvard; Ryan Gray, MIT; Cornelia Herzfeld, Cambridge resident; Cathy McCormick, Cambridge resident; Adam Mitchell, Save That Stuff; Andrea Yonge, FCR-Boston/Casella

Guests Attending: Meryl Brott, Recycling Program Manager; Bob Cappadona, FCR-Boston/Casella; David Demme, R.W. Beck; Ted Live, Cambridge resident; Randi Mail, Recycling Director; Julia Shanks, Cambridge resident

Market Update

Bob Cappadona from Casella said that China demand for recyclables is starting to come back, after very tough months beginning in October when export dried up, affecting domestic markets. After 7-10 years of great revenues, commodity value went down 80% in 3 months. Casella has been storing recyclables. Mills usually get flooded with inventory due to downtime during the Chinese New Year (last 2 weeks of January). Markets will be gauged week-to-week.

Some dollar figures comparing last summer to current: Milk jugs was \$800/ton now \$200; HDPE Color was \$650/ton now \$100; and Aluminum was \$2,000/ton now \$70. Markets for Film (LDPE) and Mixed Rigids are very tough to identify right now.

Bob said that the single stream renovation at the Charlestown facility is complete. It's twice the size of their Auburn facility including 8 optical sorts and 6 glass screens. The goal is to process 45 tons/hour. Recycling volume is up 25%, some attributable to the holidays. They will be able to host tours available after April 1.

New Recycling Program Manager, Meryl Brott

Randi introduced Meryl Brott, who began work 1/5/09, replacing Kelly Dunn. Her primary job responsibilities will be schools and large apartment buildings. Now that 6+ unit buildings are considered "large apartment buildings" for the recycling program, the total number under the program manager's purview has risen from about 350 in 2005, to over 1000, now.

Meryl brings commendable experience in environmental awareness and education. Her prior work with the [Harvard Green Campus Initiative](#) and the Environmental Careers Organization demonstrates her many program management efforts. Meryl's graduate coursework at both the University of Delaware and Kenyon College focused on environmental education, sociology and anthropology. She shared "Earthwise When" drawings she did for *Newton Tab*, see www.earthwisewhen.com.

School Composting Update

Randi reported that the King Open School (K-8) will begin a pilot lunchroom composting project in March. 20 gal lunchroom containers, lined with biodegradable bags will be emptied into the 64-gallon curbside totes, which will be serviced twice weekly by Save That Stuff.

To launch the program and educate the school community, there have been/will be staff meetings, school-wide assemblies, classroom training, posters, banners, teacher packets, letters to parents, etc. See the student-inspired program mascot, at right.



This is an exciting culmination of extensive collaboration of and support from:

- DPW: Randi, Kelly & Meryl
- King Open School: Timothy Groves, Principal; Bob Mederios, custodian; Donna Peruzzi, Teacher; Melissa Lutdke, Parent leader of "Sprouts of Hope"
- School Dept: Jim Maloney, CEO; Jack Mingle, Food & Beverage Director, Dana Ham, Director of Facilities; Justin Martin, Director of Public Information and Communications
- Public Health Dept: Jose Wendel & Dawn Olcott, School Nutritionists
- San Francisco Dept of Environment: Tamar Hurwitz (providing technical assistance)

The lunchroom sorting system will be easy, clean, and efficient. At each trash area in the cafeteria, there will be four clearly-marked containers for 4 easy steps for students:

1. Pour liquids into a small bucket.
2. Place milk carton and any plastic items into the gray trash barrel.

3. Tap food off trays into the yellow barrel.
4. Place Styrofoam trays into clear bag.

A transition to biodegradables from Styrofoam products is desired by City, but still cost prohibitive. There are options of potato, bamboo, corn-based products, and sugar-cane waste. City wants to convert all food service ware at once, to avoid confusion and contamination. Liquids will be poured down the drain helping to prevent attracting rodents at trash dumpsters.

The Cambridgeport school parent liaison has been composting some lunchroom waste (fruits and veggies) in her backyard home composter since last school year.

Random Tidbits

- RecycleMania
Rob reported that RecycleMania, a nation-wide competition of 400+ campuses, started Jan 18th. All Ivy-League universities are now participating.

For details, visit www.recyclemania.org.

- 2008 Cambridge Trash/Recycling Statistics
Adam asked if CY08 tabulations are available on waste reduction. They will be complete in mid-February, to report to MA DEP. Randi cited a 4% drop in trash collected by the City, which is at <20,000 tons/fiscal year.
- Digital TV Conversion
The federal government has postponed [the transition](#) to June. For info on how to recycle your old TV or computer monitor in Cambridge, [click here](#). This generated a discussion of online resources: [Craig's List](#), [FreeCycle](#), [MIT Reuse List-Serve](#) (anyone can join).
- DPW Web Survey
Randi asked members to go to the DPW for a survey about the Department website, as plans have begun to improve its usability.