

City of Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee

September 10, 2009 – Meeting Minutes Taken by Rob Gogan

Members Present: Luis Baigorria, Cambridge Housing Authority; Rob Gogan, Harvard University; Ryan Gray, MIT; Cornelia Herzfeld, Cambridge resident; Adam Mitchell, Save That Stuff; Laura Nichols & Corey Pilz, Cambridge Consumers Council; Andrea Yonge, Casella

Guests Present: Meryl Brott, Recycling Program Manager; Ruth Davis, MIT; John Fitzgerald, Environmental Services Manager; Joanna Herlilhy, Cambridge resident; Randi Mail, Recycling Director; Ted Live, Cambridge resident; Kathleen Thorton, Cambridge resident

Market Update

Andrea reported that commodity prices for fibers and plastics are going up, metal up slightly. Adam concurred that paper markets have recovered strongly. Glass is stable. Organics are a hot topic in MA. Because consumption is down, the volume of both recycling and trash have decreased significantly.

Andrea announced that Boston Mayor Tom Menino would be at Casella's ribbon cutting event at the Charlestown Recycling on September 21st unveiling their new "zero-sort" technology that now sorts single stream recycling. Rob Gogan also spoke at the event. Casella showed a new video about zero-sort recycling, which can be viewed on their [website](#).

Adam asked about the City's recycling rate. 35% for FY09, with nearly 13,000 tons of recyclables and just over 24,000 tons of trash.

Meet John Fitzgerald, DPW's New Environmental Services Manager

John Fitzgerald started with DPW on August 31 as the Environmental Services Manager. This position was slightly revised from the former position of Superintendent of Solid Waste. John will be overseeing the Rubbish, Street Cleaning and Recycling Divisions, as well as being involved with environmental compliance of select municipal facilities. John said he has worked in the solid waste field for his whole career, most recently at [Gypsum Recycling](#). Prior to that, he worked with Champion City Recovery in Brockton as well as Allied Waste and Waste Management. John said that he has enjoyed reading minutes from past Committee meetings.

New Recycling & Trash Brochure & Website Revision Coming Soon

Randi showed the City's new recycling and trash brochure, printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper with vegetable-based inks. The brochure was mailed to all Cambridge residents during the week of September 21. The design is simpler and clearer, with trash and recycling information side by side, more space dedicated to information on recycling containers, the Recycling Center and composting. The brochure also draws attention to the City's "[Get Rid of it Right](#)" webpage which is an A-Z list of materials with details on how to recycle, donate or dispose of just about anything. This page was renamed, formerly known as the "Donate & Recycle Listings". DPW will soon revise its entire website, including all of the recycling pages. Staff is working to increase the items and information available on the Get Rid of it Right page and improve user friendliness of the site.

Recycling information is available in other languages including [Spanish](#), [Portuguese](#), [Chinese](#) and [Haitian Creole](#). An excel spreadsheet with all four translations is also available on the [website](#). There is a simple recycling [flyer](#) that also has translations that is often distributed at large apartment buildings.

Batteries and Producer/Retailer Take Back

Rob asked whether the City recycles alkaline batteries. Regarding alkalines, [MassDEP](#) states that "domestically manufactured batteries made after 1994 no longer contain mercury and can be disposed of in the trash." The Recycling Center used to accept take video tapes, CDs and other techno-trash but DPW cancelled the program because of budget cuts and the material is not subject to MA waste bans. In addition, handling the material was very time-consuming for staff.

The discussion then turned to producer / retailer take back of toxic and hard to recycle items. Members felt that the Committee should promote retailers that take back toxic items from consumers, such as 1) Staples taking back inkjet and toner cartridges and computers; 2) UPS store taking foam packaging peanuts; and 3) Whole Foods Prospect street taking food scraps.

Composting & Gardening Update

Meryl has been visiting the King Open School to help ensure that the lunchroom composting program begins well in the new school year. Posters are up around the school, 2 banners in the cafeteria and table tents. Meryl showed students in the cafeteria items that should not be placed in the compost and said that students remember the program details well. Principals at interested schools should contact Meryl or Randi. The School Department has indicated that the 9th Grade Campus for CRLS, located on Broadway at the old Longfellow building will participate. Planning will likely begin in October for this location.

Ryan spoke about the [MIT roof top garden project](#), where Earth Boxes were placed on the roof of the Vassar Street garage. Randi stated that the City's [Container Gardening](#) workshop in May was a huge success and that the CitySprouts program grows produce at public schools and is having their [annual school garden celebration](#) on 10/3 from 11am-3pm at the Graham & Parks School.

Rob asked about the possibility of using community gardens for community compost sites. This is an interesting idea that Randi thought a sub-committee could explore, in the context of Metro Pedal Power's joint proposal with MIT graduate students for CHOW, compost hauling on wheels. It would be helpful to develop the idea with input from many stakeholders for possible funding from a new MA grant for recycling that will be available through the new Sustainable Materials Recovery Program that the MassDEP will be announcing soon, created from the Green Communities Act.

Going Around the Table...

Randi invited members to talk about projects they are working on and their interests:

- Ruth, the new co-chair of MIT's Working Group on Recycling indicated that the school is starting a new pilot composting program starting soon, but that she noticed that students do not have a lot of food scraps. The MIT Recycling Ambassadors has also spawned a new Green Energy group, which will likely combine efforts.
- Laura is excited to be a part of the Committee and encouraging family members to recycle.
- Adam is excited about Save That Stuff's new office location at 100 Terminal Street in Charlestown and their partnership with City Soil & Greenhouse to build an in-vessel composter with 100,000 sq foot greenhouse. STS has a new service: waste oil collection and is BU is piloting its use for heating. Brookline study of costing out dual-stream recycling. Pay-as-you throw proposal for Brookline died at town meeting.
- Luis said that he really wants to promote composting at the Cambridge Housing Authority and would be interested in working on a pilot at Washington Elms.
- Joanna announced the 9/24 Special City Council meeting on the climate emergency .
- Ryan spoke of an upcoming zero waste event, "Greening MIT" social with President Susan Hockfield serving 5,000 people. He complimented the City's new GreenSense program that has started promoting green practices among employees, beginning with energy conservation. He is involved with greening procurement on campus, the Urban Agriculture Fair on 9/20 in Harvard Square.
- Katherine spoke of her general interest in recycling and composting, since moving from Chicago and growing up in Vermont.
- Corey spoke about his focus on the Green Sense program in his office.