



Zero Waste Advisory Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes February 11, 2015

The Zero Waste Advisory Commission convened in a regular meeting on February 11, 2015, at Council Chambers in Austin, Texas.

Chair Rick Cofer called the Commission Meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Board Members in Attendance: Rick Cofer, Cathy Gattuso, Dave Sullivan, Faye Kazi, Jose Valera, and Kendra Bones

Staff in attendance: Bob Gedert, Michael Sullivan, Woody Raine, Gena McKinley, Tom Fulmer, Erin Benoit, Aiden Cohen, Lewis Leff, Jessica King,

Mr. Gedert recognized Rick Cofer on Visa Dennis Hobbs Individual Achievement Award received from Keep Austin Beautiful. Bob expressed appreciation of Rick for his role in Zero Waste endeavors.

Commissioner Kazi arrived at 8:00.

1. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

The first ten speakers signed up prior to the meeting being called to order will each be allowed a three-minute allotment to address their concerns regarding items not posted on the agenda.

Four citizens signed up to speak during the opportunity for citizen communication.

Kiobe White, Public Citizen, spoke on need for mandates for recycling and composting, stating that organics collection should be mandatory for all sectors of the City, not just single family homes.

Chair Rick Cofer recognized and welcomed Brandi Clark-Burton from Mayor Adler's organization called Community Cabinet.

Andrew Dobbs, Texas Campaign for the Environment, handed a document to the commission and talked about policies to advance ahead of current Zero Waste benchmarks. Mr. Dobbs said we need City Council backing these efforts and to focus on more education instead of public relations efforts and in doing so we can reach a 64-65% diversion rate in Austin.

Chair Rick Cofer responded that statistics and data are needed for validation around these efforts.

Andrew Dobbs responded that he agrees with mandatory recycling because programs in place today have not solved that problem. He feels if there's confusion and a mandate is added, people will get upset, but if people are educated, a mandate will be more effective.

Eric Goff, Compost Pedallers, expressed concern about proposals for Council Committees that increase number of meetings. Mr. Goff encouraged commissioners to talk to counterparts in Council to reduce the number of meetings being proposed.

Cathy Robinson, The Reuse People, spoke about keeping building materials out of landfill by promoting deconstruction and reuse as a green alternative to demolition.

Commissioner Valero asked about size of projects involved as eligible. Ms. Robinson said there is no limit to size of donation, and once the property owner has an approximation of value of donation of materials and cost of deconstruction estimate, they should consult with a CPA to see if it is financially viable to proceed. In her opinion, the larger the structure, the more likely it will be viable.

2. APPROVAL OF JANUARY MEETING MINUTES

The minutes from the January 2015 meeting were approved unanimously with five Commissioners present on the dais

Item 5a was taken up out of order.

5. STAFF BRIEFINGS

a. Community Climate Plan

Lewis Leff with the Office of Sustainability presented a PowerPoint on the Community Climate Plan.

Woody Raine, ARR, spoke about his work on the Materials Management TAG (Technical Advisory Group) as part of the Community Climate Plan.

Commissioner Sullivan mentioned a tool that is available to track emissions. ("Cool Climate"- <http://coolclimate.berkeley.edu/>) that shows by zip code, the amount of carbon metric tons of emissions per year, based on transportation, housing, food, services and goods; not just utilities.

Bob Gedert, ARR, spoke on City procurement, stating that there is a significant effort on the City's part to purchase goods and services a sustainable manner. He proposed that the City should work on reviewing this system.

Chair Cofer talked about an Austin Water Works ad instructing citizens to freeze cooking oil for the Landfill and that Austin Water Works should communicate with the Office of Sustainability to promote the Household Hazardous Waste services of ARR for correct information.

3. OLD BUSINESS

a. Discussion and Action - ZWAC Internal Annual Report

Commissioner Gattuso motioned, Commissioner Sullivan 2nd to adopt the 2014 ZWAC Internal Annual Report. It was adopted by unanimous vote with all 5 commissioners present on the dais.

b. Discussion and Action - Committees and Workgroups Renewals

Chair Cofer referenced a guidance document for determining if the Organics working group would like to elevate to a Committee. Mr. Cofer motioned to adopt the goal language for the Organics Management Committee, to appoint Commissioner Valera as Chair of the committee, to thank Brandi Clark-Burton for her service and replace her seat on the committee with Commissioner Bones.

Commissioner Gattuso made a motion, Commissioner Sullivan second, to adopt changes to Organics working group. All five commissioners present voted unanimously to adopt changes.

Chair Cofer returned discussion to Item 3b to adopt language of goals for the Committee for Organics Management that was just voted on. Commissioner Sullivan, Commissioner Gattuso and Bob Gedert, ARR discussed and clarified the wording of the Organics Committee within the bylaws and membership of that Committee replacing Commissioner Bones with Commissioner Paine.

A Motion was made by Commissioner Sullivan, Second Commissioner Valera, to approve the change in membership of the Organics Committee and clarify the wording.

All 5 commissioners present voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Item 4a was taken up out of order.

4a. Discussion and Action - Amend Bylaws

Chair Cofer proposed to amend the Bylaws by adding the Organics Management Committee and its duty. Motion was made by Commissioner Sullivan, Commissioner Gattuso second.

All 5 commissioners present voted unanimously to approve the motion.

3c. Discussion and Action - Proposed Recommendation No. 20150114-003b: Universal Recycling Ordinance Enforcement and Rules.

Commissioner Gattuso, ARR staff Jessica King, and Commissioner Sullivan identified and discussed the 5th whereas statement in the recommendation. Commissioner Sullivan noted that the URO Committee determined the word “difficult” was decided upon in the fifth whereas statement of the recommendation language.

Commissioner Gattuso made a motion to adopt the recommendation, Commissioner Sullivan seconded. All 5 commissioners present voted unanimously to adopt the recommendation.

4. NEW BUSINESS

b. Discussion and Action - Organics Collection & Management Programs

Two citizens signed up to speak on this item.

Commissioner Bones announced her recusal to this item due to conflict of interest. She removed herself from the dais.

Bob Gedert, ARR, presented a slideshow on organics for single-family households. Mr. Gedert explained the City’s procedure for organics collection and how ARR is working on educating citizens on the process. He explained the various challenges to the organics collection process. Mr. Gedert presented a projected 5 year rollout expansion due to the expected financial impact and noted that there is a need for alternatives to the city-wide collection and alternatives were explained.

Chair Cofer expressed that the Organics Collection proposal is a huge change and should go through the Organics Management Committee.

Eric Goff, Compost Pedallers, presented a slideshow on composting through their services as an alternative to city collection. Mr. Goff expressed confidence in the rollout approach. He stated that he believes that having a wide variety of ways to compost can create greater diversion rates.

Commissioner Valera asked about overlapping routes of service between private haulers and the City. Mr. Goff stated that it is likely that private haulers would need to provide a list of their customers within the City on regular basis that can allow for cooperation and route planning.

Chair Cofer stated that the City should ensure private sector integration is good and he hopes that the committee process comes up with a “quilt” (not blanket) approach plan with many variables reflecting the different needs of different geographic areas and waste streams.

At 8:06 pm Co-Chair Kazi joined the dais.

Bob Gedert, ARR noted that the City cannot endorse a particular company unless that company is under contract with the City and that Compost Pedallers is an active stakeholder and an interested party. He explained specific sections of the intent document. Mr. Gedert asked for action from the Commission on the intent document.

At 8:07 pm Chair Cofer left the dais and exited the meeting. Vice Chair Kazi continued to lead the discussion.

Andrew Dobbs, Texas Campaign for the Environment, expressed excitement for the policies being proposed and discussed. He noted his skepticism of compostable plastic bags and believes the 5 year rollout of the plan is too long.

Ryan Hobbs, Texas Disposal Systems, was asked to speak on bags by Commissioner Gattuso. Hobbs said compostable bags are a concern across the industry and that composting facilities are struggling with things such as compostable utensils and bags.

Mr. Gedert noted that Composting Council would be a guide for the City in ways to identify/analyze compostable materials. He noted that TCEQ rules won’t allow food in paper bags at the curb and that the timeframe for the bags to compost is not ideal.

Commissioner Valera points out the need to look at gaps in service for citizens which choose between the City and private haulers. He would like the Committee to look into this more in the future.

Commissioner Sullivan and Mr. Gedert discussed service areas. Commissioner Sullivan noted that private haulers and the City differ in their goals and benefits. Commissioner Valera and Mr. Gedert discussed routes in the proposed rollout of the plan.

Regarding meeting as a Committee, Mr. Gedert explained that in order for the Organics Management Committee to meet, the recommendation for bylaws edits has to be sent to the City Council Audit and Finance Committee for approval. At the April ZWAC meeting, the new bylaws would need to be approved. Then an official Committee meeting could be held at that point.

Michael Sullivan, ARR, noted he would get confirmation of whether the Organics working group can meet until the committee is official. Mr. Goff suggested, in the interest of time, holding a committee meeting the same day as April ZWAC. Michael Sullivan explained that due to Texas Open Meetings Act requirements for posting, there is a 72 hour period before committee can meet after its bylaws are amended (in this case, the April meeting).

A motion was made by Commissioner Valera to send the intent document to the Organics Management Committee. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gattuso and passed unanimously on a 4-0 vote.

5. STAFF BRIEFINGS

- b. Director's Report** - Recycling Markets Forecast, USBCD/Yale Diversion Report, Master Plan Program Update, Staff Hires and Promotions, Current and Upcoming Job Postings, Statistical Reports and Performance Measures

Mr. Gedert noted that future Council Actions will follow a path of review by ZWAC, then will proceed to an appropriate Council Committee and finally to full City Council.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

It was noted by Vice Chair that there is no meeting in March, 2015. Commissioner Sullivan noted that the Commission makeup will change from 7 to 11 members in July.

Bad Debt Collection – potentially April

Safety Update – can be in April or later

Recycling Economic Development Program Update – possibly in April but could be rolled back to later

Mattress Recycling – may be more appropriate later this year as staff researches

Downtown Recycling Container Audit - May

Green Purchasing – May

Organics Management Committee – dependent on review timeline

Organics Intent Document - dependent on review timeline

Vice Chair Kazi adjourned the meeting at 8:46pm with no objection.