



Zero Waste Advisory Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes April 8, 2015

The Zero Waste Advisory Commission convened in a regular meeting on April 8, 2015, in Council Chambers of City Hall in Austin, Texas.

Chair Rick Cofer called the Commission Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Board Members in Attendance: Rick Cofer, Jeffery Paine, Dave Sullivan, Fayez Kazi, Jose Valera, and Kendra Bones

Staff in attendance: Bob Gedert, Michael Sullivan, Woody Raine, Jessica King, Emlea Chanslor, Ron Romero, Donald Hardee, Richard McHale, Natalie Betts, Aaron Waters, Erin Benoit

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.

One person signed up to speak during the opportunity for citizen communication.

Andrew Dobbs, Texas Campaign for the Environment, noted that he had asked 6 weeks prior that URO enforcement be placed on the agenda. He asked that it be placed on the agenda for May.

2. APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY MEETING MINUTES

The minutes from the February 2015 meeting were approved with all six Commissioners present on the dais, with Commissioner Paine abstaining due to being absent from the February 2015 meeting.

Item 5a was taken up out of order.

5. STAFF BRIEFINGS

a. Mattress Recycling

Natalie Betts, ARR, gave a presentation about mattress recycling.

Larry Kress, Houston Furniture Bank, gave a presentation on a non-profit furniture recycling venture in the Houston area.

The Commissioners discussed variables related to mattress and furniture recycling, and asked Mr. Kress questions about how City could help a firm like his and how long it had been in operation, as well as operational questions.

Bob Gedert, ARR, stated that ARR does anticipate starting a mattress recycling program, and that one question to address is whether this is an entrepreneurial opportunity and can be financially sustainable.

Chair Cofer suggested mattress collection could be an item on future ZWAC agenda.

Derek Sinns, Redeuces, gave a presentation on a for-profit venture in mattress recycling. He found information through the Austin Materials Marketplace that Austin was looking for solutions to mattress recycling. Mr. Sinns discussed research around profit vs non-profit realms and noted feeding the community as a goal, as his firm is using some recycled materials as household items. He discussed partnering with Capital Area Food Bank on a project called Let Love Grow to make planters from recycled box spring wood for growing food.

3. OLD BUSINESS

a. Discussion and Action - Amend Bylaws

Chair Cofer called for a motion to rescind a previous action from February to amend the Bylaws of the Commission. A motion was made by Commissioner Sullivan, Commissioner Valera second. All 6 commissioners present voted unanimously to approve the motion.

b. Discussion and Action - Organics Working Group

Chair Cofer called for a motion to amend a previously approved document from February to re-establish and confirm members for a Working Group for Organics Management. A motion was made by Commissioner Sullivan, Commissioner Valera second. All six commissioners present voted unanimously to approve the motion.

c. Discussion and Action - Organics Collection & Management Programs

Two citizens signed up to speak on this item.

Bob Gedert, ARR, presented a document discussing organics collection that is intended to be presented to the Public Utilities Committee on April 15. He recommended a five year roll out of the plan presented with modest rate increases. He asked that the Commission refer discussion of the matter and attendant intent document to the newly re-formed Organics Working Group.

Eric Goff, Compost Pedallers, noted that he supported the referral of the item to the working group. He would like to ensure we understand cost of service, clarify rules, and other operational concerns such as use of compostable bags, which he regarded with skepticism.

Ryan Hobbs, Texas Disposal Systems, commented on how stakeholders would know when working group meetings are held. He expressed concern that the agenda item regarding this was written too broadly.

Andrew Dobbs, Texas Campaign for the Environment and Austin Zero Waste Alliance, apologized for not signing up to speak on this item until discussion had already begun but Chair Cofer allowed him time to speak. Mr. Dobbs advocated for a three year roll out of the organics collection program, commented on paper bags being compostable, and expressed concern over the recycling rate in past three years. Mr. Dobbs noted that City Council might want to hear more on the benefits side in terms of dollars regarding this item.

The Commissioners discussed the five year proposal. Commissioner Valera asked about percentages and how they are determined. Paine asked about cost per year after the first five years. Mr. Gedert offered to bring more detail around these questions to the working group.

Chair Cofer noted that organics master plan incorporates multiple methods. He noted that cost is something to be mindful of and mentioned public/private partnerships can demonstrate that the Department is looking for efficiencies that can create a change in top line numbers. Mr. Gedert stated that there is a 79,000 ton per year potential at stake, and that bidding out collection/hauling and processing may actually drive the cost higher, in contrast to the suggestion that this may provide cost savings.

Commissioner Kazi recalled a fairly significant billing rate increase in past years and asked about the data on diversion rate and how Austin isn't moving the needle. Mr. Gedert noted that the current proposal would bring 1-2% increase in utility bill annually.

Mr. Gedert stated that our residents believe we are green but the behavior doesn't reflect this, that 4 % growth is achievable. Mr. Gedert noted that 40% of current landfill fill could be put in blue cart, and this could increase by ten percentage points if more residents would utilize the blue carts properly. Mr. Gedert noted ARR doesn't currently have data on non-residential data diversion but that ARR is moving into citywide diversion rate measurement which will include this data hopefully by this time next year. Mr. Gedert noted that at this point the data from single family usage are the only numbers that currently exist.

Commissioner Paine and Mr. Gedert discussed cart sizes and options that could encourage behaviors around recycling and composting.

Chair Cofer noted that this item does not require an action, but would be referred to the Organics Working Group for discussion. There was no objection from the six Commissioners on the dais to this referral.

4. NEW BUSINESS

a. Discussion and Action - Construction and Demolition Reuse/Reclamation

Two citizens signed up to speak on this item.

Kathy Robinson, ReUse People, gave a presentation on reuse and reclamation of materials resulting from demolition and deconstruction of buildings.

Commissioner Paine posed a question regarding tax ramifications on demolition vs deconstruction. Ms. Robinson responded that the higher the tax bracket of parties involved increases how desirable it will be for their project.

Ms. Robinson acknowledged that not everyone wants to wait extra time required for approval of deconstruction, and that can be a demotivating factor.

Commissioner Paine and Ms. Robinson continued to discuss donation value of homes, fair market value, and IRS materials appraisal methods.

Commissioner Valera inquired about impact upon people in lower tax brackets. Ms. Robinson noted that there are still possibilities to offset expenses in lower tax brackets for choosing deconstruction methods.

Commissioner Sullivan noted that picking up a house and moving it should be first idea to try, and that he might ask City staff to review Ms. Robinson's presentation to see if there is anything noted in Texas law that could inform this type of effort. Commissioner Sullivan invited Ms. Robinson to the next Construction and Demolition Committee meeting.

5. STAFF BRIEFINGS

- a. Director's Report** - Zero Waste Event Rebates, Community Satisfaction Survey, Staff Hires and Promotions, Current and Upcoming Job Postings, Statistical Reports and Performance Measures

Mr. Gedert presented his report and noted that URO data would be ready for presentation at the next ZWAC meeting.

6. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Mattress Collection Program - tbd
STAR Ratings - June
Safety Update – May
Recycling Economic Development Program Update – May
Single Use Bag Ordinance Status Update - June
Downtown Recycling Container Audit - June
Green Purchasing – June

Chair Cofer noted that mattress recycling should remain for future discussion and asked that staff talk with Parks and Recreation Department about a briefing on public parks recycling for the May ZWAC meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Cofer adjourned the meeting at 9:06pm with no objection.