



Zero Waste Advisory Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes June 10, 2015

The Zero Waste Advisory Commission convened in a regular meeting on June 10, 2015, in Council Chambers of City Hall in Austin, Texas.

Chair Rick Cofer called the Commission Meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Board Members in Attendance: Rick Cofer, Cathy Gattuso, Dave Sullivan, and Kendra Bones

Staff in attendance: Bob Gedert, Michael Sullivan, Jessica King, Donald Hardee, Richard McHale, Erin Benoit, Richard Avila, Jeff Larson, Amy Slagle, Emlea Chanslor, Jessica Frazier, Gena McKinley, Aaron Waters

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.

Ross Smith spoke about plastic bags and what other cities are doing with recycling plastics including plastic film and/or plastic wrap and so-called commercial plastic.

2. APPROVAL OF MAY MEETING MINUTES

The minutes from the May 2015 meeting were approved with all four Commissioners present on the dais.

3. NEW BUSINESS

a. Discussion - Construction and Demolition Committee Briefing

No citizens signed up to speak on this item.

Commissioner Sullivan provided an update from the C&D Committee regarding penalties, waivers, proportionality in penalties, vendor/processor evaluation and permitting. The committee passed the administrative rules and changes to municipal code 15.6 to send to legal department. The item will return to ZWAC at a later date and will also go before the Planning Commission related to its impact on chapter 25 of the municipal code.

b. Discussion - Discussion and Possible Action - Hazard Pay Recommendation

No citizens signed up to speak on this item

Chair Cofer read the draft recommendation from the dais and requested the number of fatalities noted in the recommendation change from two to three. Chair Cofer discussed a report stating that solid waste and recycling collection as being one of 15 most dangerous lines of work. ARR Director Bob Gedert said he

would forward to COA Human Resources if the Commission approved this recommendation. Cofer noted high traffic fatalities in Austin. Commissioner Gattuso discussed pay variables with Mr. Gedert.

Commissioner Paine arrived at 6:42pm, and was properly signed in.

Chair Cofer called for a motion to approve a recommendation of the item. A motion was made by Commissioner Gattuso, Commissioner Sullivan second. All 5 commissioners present voted unanimously to approve the motion.

4. STAFF BRIEFINGS

a. Public Parks Recycling

One citizen signed up to speak on this item.

Jessica King, ARR, introduced a slideshow on the recycling in public parks and provided an overview of the funding and structure of the department.

Andrew Dobbs, Texas Campaign for the Environment, Austin Zero Waste Association, noted the expense of the bags was very high, and that it didn't pass the "smell test". He said political will is what is standing in the way of this, but that the math might not be correct.

Jeff Larsen, PARD presented the middle section of the slideshow.

Ms. King returned to the podium to discuss the partnership between the two departments regarding efforts and challenges faced around recycling in Austin parks.

Commissioner Paine inquired about custodial expense – Ms. King stated that this was for carts to move bags across long distances at buildings – due to weight of bags.

Chair Cofer inquired about cost of waste landfilling trash for the entire department of PARD. Jessica Frazier, ARR, noted that ARR has a dumpster contract with all City facilities, and described a funds reimbursement/transfer issue that enterprise departments had previously performed in support of non-enterprise departments but have since ceased the practice due to Budget Office direction that departments must pay expenses that they incur.

Chair Cofer discussed the parity between trash and recycling receptacles and asked if PARD could consider taking this into consideration, Mr. Larsen agreed that they could but there were many variables involved, such as cost.

Commissioner Sullivan asked if an inventory of waste stream had been done to determine composition and about a reward system for volunteers.

Commissioner Bones asked that "leave no trace" principles be put forth at PARD parks.

Chair Cofer mentioned losing money by landfilling trash over recycling, and said the facilities involved need to demonstrate their commitment to the URO.

Commissioner Gattuso acknowledged limited funds and noted that bags offered might not be filled all the way, and recommended incorporating training on recycling into employee evaluations.

Chair Cofer mentioned doing request for proposals to see if private sector wants to bid on these contracts as cost savings might result. Mr. Gedert noted the process of servicing and cost efficiencies that result from current methods.

Cofer asked if we could put blue carts at pools. Ms. King commented that pest variables on long heavy use weekends can impact collection.

Chair Cofer asked that ARR consider raising a fee to cover parks trash and recycling.

Mr. Gedert noted that there has been a shift in cost allocation methods over the past years to share costs between department and discussed difficulties encountered in paying for expenses out of the General fund.

b. Green Purchasing

No citizens signed up to speak on this item.

Bob Gedert, ARR, introduced the topic and noted that distance requirements for procurement ratings on tire recycling was a core issue in bringing the item for discussion.

Jessica Frazier, ARR, gave a briefing on purchasing criteria and guidelines followed by the department and asked what specific areas the Commission would like to see incorporated.

Commissioner Paine asked about used vehicle purchases. Ms. Frazier noted warranty and how it offsets maintenance expenses.

Mr. Gedert said there is a cost benefit analysis done on each purchase and noted custom orders are not a good candidate for researching used equipment value. He noted that smaller cities buy our equipment and reuse it for several years.

Commissioner Paine noted that he disagrees with practices of buying new vehicles when a one or two year old vehicle could work – noted that he was not referring to specialized vehicles, but more about pickup trucks.

Gedert said he can work with Fleet to create bid spec evaluations between new and used and determine the risk of sacrificing warranty and to create criteria for evaluation of points. Commissioner Paine asked if it is reasonable to do this for next cycle. Mr. Gedert noted that he would start the discussion of this.

The Commissioners continued the discussion of geography and points awarded for bidding based on this, and Mr. Gedert said current council is discussing local assessing of points.

c. Single Use Bag Ordinance

One citizen signed up to speak on this item.

Bob Gedert, ARR, discussed the history of how this item came to the current agenda.

Aaron Waters, ARR contract Research Associate, presented a slideshow on the environmental impact of the implementation of the Single Use Bag Ordinance since its inception in 2012.

Andrew Dobbs, Texas Campaign for the Environment, AZWA, thanked the Department for the report. He noted its value for cities and states around the country and world as an example of what happens when a community bans bags. Mr. Dobbs noted that the numbers were impressive and noted equivalents between TDS and Balcones dispel any anomaly presumed.

The Commissioners discussed the presentation with Mr. Waters. Mr. Gedert discussed how many reusable bags replaced the single use bag and discussed carbon footprint impact and offset needed. Mr. Gedert noted that one 4 mm bag needs approximately 6-8 reuses to offset its environmental impact, but that more science is needed around this assertion, and that ARR's ideal intent is 100 reuses of a bag before it is retired. Mr. Gedert noted that his position is if consumers use bags 10 times we are on the upside of the issue and that paying for a bag incentivizes this reuse.

Mr. Gedert noted that this study is showing that bags are going to landfill prematurely and we need to encourage more and more reuse. He noted that paper bags have a higher footprint by their manufacture, water and energy use, with an 8-10 times reuse needed to offset impact.

Chair Cofer noted that the single use bag ordinance says what bag you can't use and recommends removing paper as option or specifying a post-consumer content requirement, and that there is room for improvement in this area.

Mr. Gedert notes major litter reduction from anecdotal evidence via photos.

Commissioner Bones asked about HEB bags not being made of paper, and Mr. Waters explained that it was about cost.

Mr. Gedert noted that a Fort Worth and Austin comparison noted in press as not realistic, and that Mr. Waters demonstrated similar characteristics of the communities in his report.

a. Director's Report

Mr. Gedert presented a briefing on the topics below:

Downtown Recycling Containers Update, CB&I Waste Characterization Report Recommendations, TXP Economic Development Report Recommendations, Ecology Action Update, Certificates Conveyance, City Council Actions, Staff Hires and Promotions, Current and Upcoming Job Postings, Statistical Reports and Performance Measures

Commissioner Gattuso wondered if people understood they could have more than one blue recycling cart for free.

Commissioner Sullivan asked to consider bus stops on Lavaca and Guadalupe for recycling containers.

Mr. Gedert asked for input on training for future members.

Commissioner Bones suggested a walk-through of ARR facilities.

Commissioner Gattuso asked for a deeper examination of the recommendations brought here

Chair Cofer requested a staff briefing on URO waivers and asked that the new Commission reappoint Committees from the current iteration.

- 5. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**
ZWAC Election of Officers - July
Zero Waste Training for New Members – July
Zero Waste Training for New Members - August

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Cofer adjourned the meeting at 8:34pm with no objection.