



Zero Waste Advisory Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes January 13, 2016

The Zero Waste Advisory Commission convened in a regular meeting on January 13, 2016, in Council Chambers in City Hall in Austin, Texas.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Acuna called the Commission Meeting to order at 6:38 p.m.

Board Members in Attendance: Gerry Acuna, Shana Joyce, Jeff Jampietro, Heather-Nicole Hoffman, Stacy Guidry, Amanda Masino, Kendra Bones, Joshua Blaine, Kaiba White

Staff in attendance: Bob Gedert, Michael Sullivan, Erin Benoit, Richard McHale, Jessica Frazier, Donald Hardee, Emlea Chanslor, Meme Cardenas, Natalie Betts

2. APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER MEETING MINUTES

Commissioner Blaine made a motion to approve minutes (with one edit regarding Commissioner Joyce returning to the dais) for the regular meeting of November 18, 2015, Commissioner Guidry second. The minutes were approved 8-0-2, Commissioners Acuna and Valera abstaining due to being absent from the November 2015 meeting.

Note: General Citizen Communication was left off of this agenda in a typographical error at publication past the deadline to amend the agenda. The Chair read the error and no members of the public requested to speak on items not listed on the agenda.

STAFF BRIEFING - Item 4a. Austin Recycles Games This item was taken up out of order.

Meme Cardenas, ARR, presented background on the item and asked the Commissioners to promote the Austin Recycles Games in their networks and Council districts, and noted that staff would update them as soon as the latest data on each district is tabulated. The Commission discussed the item and provided feedback.

2. OLD BUSINESS

a. Discussion and Action - Efficiency and Cost of Service Audit Update and Working Group

One citizen signed up to speak on this item. Bob Gedert, ARR, presented a slideshow on the item.

Andrew Dobbs, Texas Campaign for the Environment, asked the Commission not to abandon the drive for an independent 3rd party audit. Commissioner Blaine asked what in particular Mr. Dobbs was concerned with. Mr. Dobbs noted there was no possibility of an economic downturn noted, for example.

Mr. Gedert noted the potential of 20-40,000 new tons can be captured with the addition of new programs.

Commissioner Masino asked about the data and how weekly collection estimates were collected. Mr. Gedert noted weekly service requests, waste characterization studies, discussed north and South sites, traffic patterns, safety on routes, conservation on routes, driver input.

Mr. Gedert noted at least weekly collection of trash is required by state law. Biweekly pickup of trash would require TCEQ approval and ARR would need to ensure near 100% that petrucibles were out of the cart (food waste and diapers primarily) and suggested unpairing weekly recycling from weekly trash - which differs from master plan.

The commission members discussed diversion rates, weekly recycling, testing a weekly service in the Recycling Games, truck costs, phasing out 96 gallon carts and large family impacts that might occur from this.

Commissioner Joyce requested data from the organics pilot and stated that recycling is more important now and perhaps organics can be built in in the future. Staff and commission members discussed other cities' programs and costs, variable rates based on cart sizes, opting out, and public/private partnerships.

Chair Acuna suggested possibly marketing 96 gallon carts, cited a 2005 diversion rate and how single stream recycling increased diversion but stalled and disagreed that new programs aimed at zero waste at any cost are useful. Mr. Gedert noted balancing affordability with any growth of new programs is needed.

Chair Acuna described entertaining a motion to approve working group to sit down with staff approximately one day per week as a precursor to an audit, preferably a 3rd party one, but did not make a motion.

Chair Acuna asked for volunteers for the working group. Vice Chair Gattuso, Commissioners White, Masino, Bones, and Chair Acuna volunteered.

Commissioner Guidry moved to create an audit and cost of service working group, with a second by Commissioner Valera. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Gedert assigned himself Jessica Frazier as a contact, and read an example of a previous working group goal. Chair Acuna said the goal of the working group was to create a simple efficiency and cost of service audit and to look at the internal aspects of the department.

Commissioner Blaine asked about 3rd party audit and made a motion to request that department staff and city management pursue the actions necessary to initiate a 3rd party audit of the Department it within the next year. Commissioner Bones seconded the motion and Chair Acuna made a friendly amendment to add the words "as soon as possible" and that the audit be an independent one. The amendment was accepted by the maker of the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

3. NEW BUSINESS

a. Discussion and Action - Landfill Maintenance and Gas Collections Contract

No citizens signed up to comment on this item. Donald Hardee, ARR, presented the item and requested a favorable recommendation from the Commission. Commissioner Hoffman made a motion to approve the recommendation, Commissioner Blaine second. The Commission unanimously voted to approve recommendation of the item.

4. STAFF BREIFINGS

Item 4b. [re] Manufacturing Hub this item was taken up out of order and noted as related to Item 3b. Natalie Betts, ARR, presented a briefing and slideshow on the [re] Manufacturing Hub.

Item 3b. Discussion and Action - Proposed Land Sale: 4711 Winnebago Lane

Two citizens signed up to speak on this item

Andrew Dobbs, Texas Campaign for the Environment spoke in support of item 3b and encouraged that the ZWAC recommend approval of the sale of the property.

Bob Gregory, Texas Disposal Systems, spoke on item 3b and noted that the action item regards the sale of the land on 4711 Winnebago Lane but that the presentation given encompasses a budget amendment and a Bolm Road property lease which are not on the current agenda and should not be voted on tonight. He said the impression given when both items are taken up together lends the appearance that they are both being voted on. Mr. Gregory further noted that he supports the [re]Manufacturing Hub, but that the commission has not specifically voted for the [re]Manufacturing Hub up or down and that information being disseminated about it was not specific. He noted that he was seeing certain documents related to Hub for the first time, as it was not part of the posted agenda backup. Mr. Gregory discussed end-of-lease issues, payment waivers, and stated that issues involved with the [re] Manufacturing Hub can total 9.5 million dollars when contractual matters were considered. He emphasized that the Commission only vote regarding the agenda item 3b regarding the sale of Winnebago property, because the Hub briefing was only a staff briefing and not an action item.

Commissioner Valera asked why this item was referred to ZWAC by Council. Mr. Gedert noted that Council had voiced questions of whether the land sale the best use or should the land be retained, and that is not normal practice for a land sale to go before a Commission. Mr. Gedert said there have been many presentations to ZWAC on the [re]Manufacturing Hub and there will be a formal vote in the future on construction costs for the Hub, but in order to give context for the sale staff needed to present on the Hub.

Mr. Gedert restated that the item being considered is the land sale, not the [re]Manufacturing Hub. Mr. Gedert advised Mr. Gregory against discussing ongoing private contract negotiations.

Commissioner Blaine noted a coming construction deadline and asked what the plan was if this land sale is not approved by Council? Mr. Gedert noted he was to return to Council Audit and Finance Committee to discuss alternatives, such as borrowing internally and paying back through annual appropriations, which would impact rates. Mr. Gedert noted that he has opposed using rate increases to fund this for the entire 4 year process of this project and continues to oppose that as a mechanism for funding.

Chair Acuna noted he was not sure the Hub was the best investment now and if there were no Hub, could ARR use funds to build up reserve fund? Mr. Gedert noted it is the general position of the city budget office is not to use one time funds to lower rates, and ARR is currently asking to put the proceeds in CIP fund, and yes it could be used to build up reserve fund. Mr. Gedert noted the ZWAC has not voted on the Hub but has been in support of the Hub since its inception, and noted a platform of a rate impact would bring the question of whether to proceed, and that would be a question for Council to consider.

Commissioners and staff discussed self-funding, leasing as an option, letters of interest and industry interest, and cost recovery. Ms. Betts noted it is ARR's goal to negotiate leases that factor in diversion and job creation, and long term revenue could be realized, but there is a current requirement for upfront funds.

Chair Acuna requested projections based on today's leasing values for a more accurate return on investment estimate. Ms. Betts noted that she respects that question and that the Hub is a unique project and there are not many market comparisons based on her research, but that there was strong industry interest expressed.

Commissioner Blaine made a motion to recommend approval of item 3b Proposed Land Sale: 4711 Winnebago Lane, Commissioner Guidry second. The motion passed 9-0-1. Commissioner Valera abstained. Mr. Gedert noted he would communicate to Council that this recommendation had nothing to do with the [re]Manufacturing Hub, but was strictly a vote to recommend selling the property. Mr. Gedert noted he would provide an update on the [re]Manufacturing Hub at the next ZWAC meeting.

4c. Director's Report – Mr. Gedert presented a report on Departmental and Program Updates, recent City Council Actions, Staff Hires and Promotions, Current and Upcoming Job Postings, Statistical Reports and Performance Measures. Mr. Gedert asked that the Commission pay attention to the employees noted in the report recognized for their achievement.

5. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Approval of Bylaws – this item will be ready for the next agenda assuming Council reviews it by then.

Diversion Rate Study, regarding non-residential city wide collection calculations, Mr. Gedert noted this item will be ready for April presentation to the Commission.

Regarding the Citywide Organics Collection Update, Mr. Gedert noted he would like to bring forth a cost/benefit analysis of city wide organics and weekly recycling. Commissioner Joyce requested statistics/results on the organics pilot. Mr. Gedert noted he would request from staff and these will be presented at the April meeting.

Commissioner Valera asked that when the body reviews future land sales that the closer it can be tied to the mission of this commission the easier it would make the process.

Updates on the Travis County interlocal agreement, the Cost of Service/Audit Working Group and [re]Manufacturing Hub income generation/projection numbers were requested by Chair Acuna. Mr. Gedert noted that staff liaison Michael Sullivan would schedule the first meeting of the working group recently formed.

Regarding MRF contracts, Mr. Gedert noted that discussions could possibly be covered if contracts are finalized by the next meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Acuna at 9:58pm, to no objection.