



Zero Waste Advisory Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes May 11, 2016

The Zero Waste Advisory Commission convened in a regular meeting on May 11, 2016, in Council Chambers in City Hall in Austin, Texas.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Acuna called the Commission Meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Board Members in Attendance: Gerry Acuna, Cathy Gattuso, Shana Joyce, Heather-Nicole Hoffman, Stacy Guidry, Amanda Masino, Joshua Blaine, Kaiba White

Staff in attendance: Bob Gedert, Michael Sullivan, Erin Benoit, Ron Romero, Jessica Frazier, Jessica King, Richard McHale, Donald Hardee, Richard Avila, Roslyn Kygar, Aiden Cohen, Tom Fulmer, Nathan Shaw-Meadow, Amy Slagle, Sarah Hoover

1. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

No members of the public signed up to speak on this item.

2. APPROVAL OF APRIL 2016 MEETING MINUTES

Co-Chair Gattuso noted a clarification to item 4d to state clearly the intent of the department has always been to outsource for organics outreach and education. Commissioner Hoffman made a motion to approve the minutes as amended for the meeting of April, 13 2016, Co-Chair Gattuso second. The minutes were approved 8-0-3, with Commissioners Valera, Bones and Jiampietro absent.

4. NEW BUSINESS

4b. Discussion and Action: Austin's 2015 Community Diversion Study - comprehensive evaluation of community diversion efforts using data from private haulers, landfill and recycling facilities, and businesses, including reuse and donation activities.

This item was taken up out of order.

One member of the public signed up to speak on this item, but later declined.

Aiden Cohen, ARR, presented the item, provided background information, and introduced Christina Siebert from CB&I, the firm contracted to develop the study.

Bob Gedert, ARR, remarked on the study and asked for questions from the commission.

Commissioners asked clarifying questions about the study and Ms. Siebert and Mr. Cohen responded.

Mr. Gedert discussed a series of meetings with NRC about a national measurement system. At the moment they are using the most common thread of diversion but there is a wide spread of definitions around diversion.

Commissioner Masino inquired about the data, and discussed variances, generator behavior, sorting. Commissioner Guidry inquired about data collection practices and/or credits for reuse, and variables behind the data, for instance if the data were privately held.

Co-Chair Gattuso discussed URO impact and Aiden Cohen, ARR, noted that by October 1, 2018 all commercial properties would be impacted so the URO relevance would be simpler to cross reference.

Commissioner Guidry recommended lid lifting stay in future analyses. Commissioner White discussed donation and reuse data as well as landscape material.

Ms. Siebert discussed some of the background variables behind reuse and donation and where to draw the line at defining what could be counted and how diversion and goals were defined in the zero waste master plan. Reuse was 2.5% of the diversion rate. Adding in reduction brought that rate to 3%. Ms. Siebert noted that landscaping was challenging as for instance some mulching was being done on site, and some yard trimmings are being put in trash.

Commissioner White expressed some concern with how choosing not to use an item could be considered diversion.

Commissioner Guidry asked about electronics items and what has been done to educate businesses on this.

Mr. Gedert and Aiden Cohen answered and mentioned producer responsibility work currently being done by staff with the Texas Producer Stewardship Council to reduce toxicity and increase recycling in this category.

Chair Acuna asked if there were further questions and none were posed. No motion was made to take action on the item.

Commissioner Masino was off the dais from 8:11 to 8:15.

OLD BUSINESS

3a. Discussion and Action: ARR Budget Process Update and Departmental/Operational Cost Savings Suggestions

Bob Gedert, ARR, presented a slideshow on the item.

Commissioner White inquired about yard trimming costs and what impact would be on that if organics was implemented. Commissioner White asked about Green Choice energy program, wondering how much is it costing the department and that it is no longer the wisest use of funds based on changes that have occurred in the program. Mr. Gedert noted he would follow up on calculations regarding this question.

Hoffman, how is xeriscaping impacting yard collections? Mr. Gedert noted that this year was a wet year and a spike in yard trimmings has occurred.

Commissioner Joyce asked if organics collection would impact yard trimmings collections. Mr. Gedert describes technical truck specs for collection both and overall proposed rate change for organics as combined with yard trimmings. Jessica Frazier, ARR, responded that in our forecast it does look like ARR might have to increase rates. In June and definitely in July the rate increase will be presented. Commissioner Joyce asked if we would review and make decision at the same meeting or in August, and Mr. Gedert said unfortunately with the budget timeline as it is the answer was July instead of August. Commissioner Joyce was off dais from 8:46pm – 8:50pm

Co-Chair Gattuso asked about total removal of 96 gallon trash carts. Mr. Gedert said this year it was not being recommended by staff but the Commission might recommend it if it desired at next month's meeting. He noted

after a downward progression, at 5% level would be when the department would recommend withdrawal of 96 gallon trash carts.

Commissioner Guidry asked about Clean Community Fee whether if there has been pushback from business community on this? Ms. Frazier discussed the cost of service analysis discussion from the previous month's meeting where business outreach and education costs were shifted from residential to commercial customers within the fee.

Commissioners discussed cart sizes. Ms. King explained how staff tries to gauge what sizing needs are, and how some customers like to have a cushion or extra space for unexpected increases in trash produced.

Commissioner Guidry recommends possibly increasing the cost of the 64 gallon cart. Mr. Gedert explains that the recommendation would emanate from the ZWAC and it would be up to the Council to approve it. Mr. Gedert noted that a proposal changing cents per gallon, would be a policy decision requiring Council action within budget process.

Commissioner Masino asked about peer city comparisons, noting San Antonio's natural gas fleet and lessons from their experience and asked if there were any plans for how to address diversity and justice issues, for instance if there were any plans to interface with Chief Diversity Officer that is coming on staff.

Mr. Gedert said yes and mentioned the Austin Budget Simulator (info he will include in next meeting) as a new way to gather public input that takes multiple demographic variables into consideration.

Commissioner Blaine discussed carts and rates and how to eliminate 96 gal without impacting other sizes.

Mr. Gedert noted it could be feasible to eliminate the 96 gallon cart over 5 years.

Commissioners discussed downsizing, fixed fees and what fees are related to what service.

Commissioner Blaine asked about possibly rewarding businesses who are doing things correctly. Mr. Gedert suggested this would be using rates as market driver for behavior – and he would have to research it. Commissioner Blaine clarified that he was referring to the Clean Community fee being calculated as a tiered rate based on business size rather than as a flat rate.

Chair Acuna noted if phase out the 96 gallon carts occurs you have to make that up someplace else.

Ms. Frazier discussed shifts in differentials and said she would bring revenue amounts generated by each cart sizes and other revenue streams to demonstrate the differentials. Chair Acuna asked to consider the true cost of phasing out 96 gallons.

Ms. Frazier noted that “what policy at what cost” is the model of budget planning.

Mr. Gedert noted that staff can bring differential numbers next month. And there was a 2% customer shift calculated into forecast that he can fully discuss impact of next month.

Co-chair Gattuso asked if instead of punishing 96 gallon cart users, to reward the lowest tiers. Mr. Gedert notes that best way to reflect this is to discuss revenue impacts based on shifting lower volumes to lower per gallons charge.

Chair Acuna asked about carbon foot print slide, and Mr. Gedert noted projections were hypothetical.

Andrew Dobbs, Texas Campaign for the Environment, zero waste goals haven't been mentioned in this discussion, and bearing that in mind why would we prefer 59% of our customers on the 64 gallon cart in 2021? He proposed dramatic solutions are required to get to 75% diversion rate, and to consider this as you look to budgets in the future. Mr. Gedert noted that current approaches were not progressive enough in Mr. Dobb's opinion, and agreed with Mr. Dobbs.

Commissioner White asked what ideas Mr. Dobbs had. He noted that some smaller NE suburbs have shifted from cart based service to by the bag service. You can drop rates but buy bags for it and it would be possible to eliminate trash altogether, but the proposals were not ready for the public yet due to their different model.

The discussion ended and there was no action taken on the item.

NEW BUSINESS

4a. Discussion and Action: Organics Processing Solicitation Update

One citizen signed up to speak on the item.

Jessica Frazier presented a memo and asked for questions from the commission.

Commissioner Blaine asked about scope changes in the solicitation. Ms. Frazier noted that it was part of what cannot be discussed until the solicitation is made public.

Chair Acuna stated he simply wanted a better handle on the financial numbers behind the proposed organics expansion, and noted that staff has a presentation next week where they will present a number to Council, and he is trying to determine what is involved in that number.

Mr. Gedert noted the questions were vague and this solicitation was the backend processing part of a proposed expansion of organics program. ARR can use Hornsby Bend facility for yard trimmings and this would be a component of the expansion. We need to go through the solicitation process in order to get to the real expense, therefore the process is important to preserve, and the launch date for expansion is about 12 months out.

Chair Acuna noted his questions are to figure out how a number was arrived at which will be presented at next week's Council meeting in order to gauge budget impact.

Ms. Frazier described the expense calculation process.

Commissioner Blaine asked if the TDS master contract could be a solution.

Ms. Frazier answered that the more options ARR has logistically is best, with the ideal being multiple locations and ergo multiple vendors to reduce transport time.

Mr. Gedert stated that the expectation is not that the Council says yes or no at its next meeting, but rather it's a policy decision as to whether Council supports weekly recycling, organics expansion. ZWAC fits in the middle of a several month budget process, with Council decision at end of process.

Commissioner Blaine asked if ZWAC should make a recommendation on policy at this meeting. Mr. Gedert stated we can propose: if we do nothing where will be in 2020; propose weekly recycling to 2020, and other scenarios with cost impacts too, but the larger policy question is whether the master plan is embraced by this council. Mr. Gedert noted the policy roadmap is adjusted every year by the budget process, and that's the flexibility of the master plan.

Andrew Dobbs, TCE, spoke on the item, and stated he appreciates the ability of the department to find efficiencies. He noted that one of the best processors in the state is TDS and they received recycling through an extension of their contract in the past. He noted that he is not stating one vendor is better than another but that we want to seek best service at best price.

Discussion ended and no action was taken on the item.

4c. Discussion and Action: Statistical Reports – walk through detail of reports generated monthly from Director's Report

Mr. Gedert presented a set of reports that the commission views monthly in the Directors Report.

Commissioner White asked about the differences in pricing between the vendors.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hoffman, seconded by Commissioner Guidry, to extend the meeting past 10:00 pm. The motion passed unanimously.

5. STAFF BRIEFINGS

- a. Recycling Processing Agreements** - Update on recently executed contract extensions. Mr. Gedert presented a slideshow with information on the above item.
- b. Director's Report** – Special Events and Waivers, Greenhouse Gas Impacts, ARR Website Update - What's Recyclable and What Can Go Into The Trash Container, Downtown Diversion Containers; City Council Actions, Statistical Reports and Performance Measures

Commissioner Joyce congratulated her Council District 8 as winner of the Austin Recycles Games. Mr. Gedert noted District 6 also won for most improved.

6. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Hoffman, seconded by Commissioner Joyce, and the meeting was adjourned by Chair Acuna at 10:05 pm, to no objection.