



Zero Waste Advisory Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes February 13, 2019

The Zero Waste Advisory Commission convened in a regular meeting on February 13, 2019 in Council Chambers in City Hall in Austin, Texas. The following are the meeting highlights. For detailed information, please visit http://www.austintexas.gov/cityclerk/boards_commissions/meetings/97_1.htm.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Acuna called the Commission Meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Board Members in Attendance: Gerry Acuna, Cathy Gattuso, Amanda Masino, Melissa Rothrock, Jonathan Barona, Kaiba White.

Absent are: Joshua Blaine, Kendra Bones, Heather-Nicole Hoffman, Blythe Christopher de Orive, Phil Howry.

Staff in attendance: Sam Angoori, Richard McHale, Ron Romero, Amy Slagle, Gena McKinley, Jason McCombs, Victoria Rieger, Shana Riviello, Mike Turner, Memi Cardenas, Armelle Ouedraogo, Gabriel Gonzalez and Andy Dawson.

1. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

Item 1

Nancy Harris signed up to speak about the Crestview Neighborhood Survey. She discussed the call-in only bulk pickup pilot that has been run by the Austin Resource Recovery (ARR) on route 23 that includes Crestview. Ms. Harris stated that the purpose of the pilot is to replace the existing bulk neighborhood pickup that is held every 6 months with up to 3 call-ins a year. The survey was distributed to 2,400 homes and information was made available via the neighborhood newsletter and social media by Crestview Neighborhood Association (CNA). The survey was divided into 2 parts with a total of 16 questions. 45 individuals participated into the survey and 14 individuals did not take the second part.

Ms. Harris presented the results of the survey to the Commission. Those that took the survey did not prefer the pilot to the twice a year bulk pick up, but did not mind some level of call in options. They did not want call-ins to replace the twice yearly neighborhood pick up. Based on the results, 21 responses gave the 3 call in options an unacceptable ranking. When asked if they prefer the pilot to the neighborhood wide twice a year bulk pick-up, 79% of the responders said no. Ms. Harris advised that the neighborhood is not happy that the old collection method has not been restored; they believe that the call-in option for bulk pick-up is inefficient.

Some of the responses and comments show that people enjoyed the neighborhood wide pick up as it helped with cleaning up their garage or consider it being a community event. Some people felt uncomfortable with calling to pick up one or two bulky items which may disappear before the truck arrived. Others believe that the pilot might be more costly than the neighborhood wide pickup. Others felt that the City did not involve the neighborhoods in the planning stage and this maybe a flaw to the program.

Chair Acuna would like to know what the tonnage of the bulky item that ARR picked up. He was advised that the numbers are not reflected in the director's report. Amy Slagle advised that they are still compiling data and will make them available soon.

Commissioner Kaiba White advised that she had a wonderful experience in her neighborhood with the bulky pick up and she even found herself helping with transferring the electronics to the Todd Lane Recycling Center.

2. APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 14, 2018 MEETING MINUTES

Item 2

Chair Acuna entertained a motion. Commissioner Masino moved for approval. Seconded by Commissioner Gattuso. Vote: 6-0.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

3. OLD BUSINESS

3a. Discussion and Action - Approval of October 10, 2018 meeting minutes

Adam Gregory, TDS, chose to speak on this topic. Mr. Gregory stated that the minutes were not representative of the meeting. Mr. Gregory would like ARR to revisit the minutes and make it more accurate. Mr. Gregory suggests that the Commission add the provided transcript to the minutes.

Commissioner Gattuso recommended that they table this approval for next meeting. Chair Acuna entertained a motion to table the minutes until next meeting. Motion to table and revisit the October minutes was made by Commissioner White. Seconded by Commissioner Barona. Vote: 6-0.

4. NEW BUSINESS

4a. Discussion and Action – Affordability Study Recommendations related to the Affordability Study presentation given on November 14, 2018.

Adam Gregory, spoke on this topic. Mr. Gregory stated that ARR staff only wants a recommendation to move forward with the study but he would like to remind the commission that there is more work to do on the study before it is taken to City Council.

Sam Angoori, advised that this study was done because of the City Council request and that ARR is not asking the commission for any recommendation. He advised that the consultant was mandated to compare our City to other cities.

Andrew Dobbs chose to speak on this topic. Mr. Dobbs said it would not be a good idea for ARR to create a new waste facility since it is against the Zero Waste initiatives.

Chair Acuna said he believes that affordability is a challenge and we need to look at it closely.

Chair Acuna stated that he believes that affordability is a challenge and we need to look at it closely. He has voted for a resolution for the rate payers in Austin gets the best rates for the services they received. Mr. Dobbs said he would like for the transfer station to be removed from the resolution that was presented.

Chair Acuna believes that diversion facilities like Todd Lane are his vision of a transfer facility. Mr. Dobbs said he would like for the transfer station to be removed from the equation. Commissioner Gattuso wanted to know if the transfer station is about waste. Chair Acuna clarified that the transfer station is an option and can be stated that it is a North Austin drop-off center with recycling option and collecting materials that could be taken to Todd Lane

Commissioner White wants more clarification about the transfer station. Chair Acuna advised that they did not look at the transportation aspect of the Zero Waste goal. Mr. Angoori stated that ARR is revising the Master Plan and every possible option and ideas to improve services is being considered.

Commissioner Masino commented that we need to think about the long-term cost instead of short-term cost. Commissioner Masino said that it would could save someone's life to have a drop-off station for hazardous waste. Mr. Angoori advised that we are working on a North East Service Center which will have a provision for a Hazardous Waste Site. Commissioner White commented that the program may have limitations because people might not have transportation. Mr. Angoori said that ARR has programs that provide help to the elderly to pick up their hazardous waste. Commissioner White believes that the service needs to be expanded to everyone.

Commissioner Rothrock wanted to know how often the request from the elderly to pick-up hazardous waste is. Andy Dawson, ARR, advised that there are about 10 pick-ups a week and it is wide spread all over the City.

Chair Acuna advised that his goal is to support ARR in their initiatives and believes that we need to try to find that balance so that there is a reduction and improve services. Commissioner White wants the transfer station to be taken away from the resolution.

Commissioner Rothrock said that Balcones is a company that takes care of recycling, they have a truck pick up the contaminated product.

Chair Acuna is seeking for a recommendation to remove transfer station from the resolution. He advised that staff will need to amend the resolution with efficient North Austin disposal. Commissioner White would like to see an update before they can move forward. Commissioner Gattuso would like to recommend one part of the resolution today. Chair Acuna would like to table this item until the next meeting.

Chair Acuna is concerned about the transportation cost. Commissioner White suggest to remove the transfer station and recommend that City management evaluates the cost for ARR Trucks.

Chair Acuna would like for a comprehensive document to be given. Mr. Angoori advised that the RFP is out and it may take a year and a half for it to be completed. Mr. Angoori also added that the director's report has a provision for the HHW pick up increase.

The item was tabled until the April meeting.

4b. Discussion and Action – Vote for URO Committee members

Commissioner Barona volunteered. Chair Acuna moved for Commissioner Barona to be added to URO Committee. Seconded by Commissioner White. Vote: 6-0.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

5. STAFF BRIEFINGS

5a. Director's Report: Slow Down To Get Around – Resolution, China Report, Expansion of Household Hazardous Waste Program, Truck Breakdown Analysis, Solicitations Update, Statistical Reports and Performance Measures

Richard McHale, ARR, said that the department moved to Council for approval since the last meeting was cancelled where the resolution was passed. Mr. McHale hopes that Texas will be the 24th state to pass this resolution.

Ron Romero, ARR, talked about the China Impact report. Mr. Romero said he sat with Adam Gregory at TDS and Balcones regarding composting. Mr. Romero said that both vendors are good and they do things similarly and some things very different. Mr. Romero commented the city of Austin is very pleased about the services provided.

Commissioner White wanted information on how recyclable materials are disposed of. Mr. Romero advised that he cannot speak for each processor and that they will have to speak specifically regarding their process. Commissioner Rothrock wanted to know if there was a risk assessment for back-up companies to move recyclables. Mr. Romero commented that the individual companies would have to speak to their specificities.

Mr. Angoori added that China's new recycling policy is making people rethink it and the US industry is forced to rethink on what to do and it they still want to deal with China.

Staff met with the City of Pflugerville for an effort to have a site in the City of Pflugerville for collection. Commissioner Masino would like to know about the education for household hazardous waste. Mr. Angoori advised that they will gather more information for next meeting.

5b. Curbside Composting Program Analysis – Presentation by ARR Staff

Shana Riviello advised about the composting studies. The compost set out uses started from November through January 2019. They had 40 curbside routes twice week. The overall set out rates was 28.9%. 200 to 300 samples were collected from the 54 routes and sorted it into different categories.

Commissioner Gattuso said she would like to see a blast of PR or education. Commissioner White asked about targeted education for those that are contaminating recycling. Memi Cardenas, ARR, advised that ARR is sending direct mailings out and some door-to-door contacts for the heavily contaminated areas. Mike Turner, ARR, advised that ARR is working with Austin Energy to send paperless emails to the affected areas. The data comes from a random sampling at this moment and that helps with pinpointing the routes.

Commissioner White would like to know if the VFTU has a provision for the specific addresses to be reviewed. Amy Slagle also advised that the trucks are automated and they have tags on the carts and supervisors.

Commissioner Masino would like to know what the decrease in volume is, and how many people downsized their trash carts.

Commissioner Rothrock wanted to know the process of the set out. Ms. Riviello advised that they drive to a random location to see the pattern of the set out.

Chair Acuna wanted clarification about the data for 2018, if they had a reduction in garbage collection. Ms. Riviello confirmed that the reduction did happen.

5c. URO Educational Outreach Efforts – Presentation by ARR Staff

Jason McCombs, ARR, presented the item. In an effort to provide educational information to the community, he advised that they have flyers that they hand out at different events, publications on Facebook, publications via print media, flyers on utility bills, targeted marketing, direct mail, radio advertising. For the past 2 years they have been tracking the submission rate to see how the vendors are meeting the URO. The current rate is 61% until February 1st. They are allowed to provide two extensions if the rate does not meet the URO requirement.

Chair Acuna wants to know the impact that the contracted outreach personnel have. Mr. McCombs replied that they are used in different capacities; they are used for phone calls, and email outreach.

Mr. McCombs advised that they have used some different approaches since 2017 and contractors have been doing one-on-one conversation with users.

Chair Acuna would like to know how many internal staff that are helping with phone calls. Mr. McCombs advised that they have 7 members and 2 contractors.

Commissioner Barona asked how the information received is validated. Mr. McCombs said that it is complaint driven and site visits are taken; other times it is a random audit. Commissioner Barona asked if the validation could be tied to the food permitting. Mr. McCombs said that has been talked about.

Commissioner Masino asked if feedback could be given on the suitability of the business' plan. Mr. McCombs said that feedback is given through the questions that are asked, once the form is turned in, it alerts the team if something is incorrect.

Commissioner White asked about the consequences of not submitting a site plan. After the two notifications go out, ARR will review the properties that did not submit, and case files are formed. ARR staff will send the information to Austin Code who addresses the issue.

Commissioner White asks since complaints are the measure drivers, how ARR is addressing it to the public. Mr. McCombs responded that the information is on the website. Commissioner White advised that it should be sent to the Office of Sustainability for information to be made available to everyone. Sam Angoori advised that he has discussed this topic with Austin Code's Director.

Commissioner Gattuso went to some stores and saw that people are not following the URO. Mr. McCombs said that he spoke to them and it seems like the managers are the ones that have knowledge of this.

6. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Officer Elections, Recycling contract comparison (expected to be presented in May), URO educational outreach effort as a discussion/action item, Hazardous Waste Education. Master Plan Update on the Director's Report.

ADJOURNMENT A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Gattuso, seconded by Commissioner Masino on a unanimous decision. The meeting was adjourned by Chair Acuna at 8:37 pm to no objection (Unanimous).