



Zero Waste Advisory Commission

Meeting Minutes

March 11, 2021

The Special Called Meeting of the Zero Waste Advisory Commission convened through Video Conference on Thursday, March 11th, 2021, due to COVID-19 Disaster Declaration for all Texas Counties. The following are the meeting highlights. For detailed information please visit: <https://austintx.new.swagit.com/videos/114345>

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Acuna called the Commission Meeting to order at 6:15 pm

Board Members in Attendance: Gerry Acuna, Cathy Gattuso, Amanda Masino, Melissa Rothrock, Ian Steyaert, and Kaiba White

Board Members not in Attendance: Lisa Barden, Jonathan Barona, and Janis Bookout

Staff in attendance via WebEx: Ken Snipes, Tammie Williamson, Donald Hardee, Christine Whitney, Gena McKinley, Selene Castillo, Jason McCombs, Ron Romero, Dwight Scales, and Jaime Germany Terry

Chair Acuna opened with comments,

1. **APPROVAL of the Meeting Minutes Item deferred to next meeting (Chair Acuna would have to recuse himself on the vote 6 members were present).**

2. NEW BUSINESS

2a Discussion and Action – Discussion and Action Austin Resource Recovery Brownfields RCA

Christine Whitney ARR Brownfields Program Manager mentions we have two prior rotation lists that we have managed through the city for grant funding and the operational due. This is a selection of five contractors that went to panel review and they were selected. Now we need to move forward with approval from Council. The contract is five years, five contractors to perform environmental engineering services for 4.2 million (originally 3.5 million).

Commissioner Ian Steyaert: Is this a replacement for an existing contract or is this something new that we haven't done before?

Christine Whitney response: We have on that we're running out of authority. The last time we did the RFQ, we had asked for three contractors for 1.2 million and we funds were used quickly. The Capitol Contracting Office asked us politely to increase the amount. SO, we're trying to get more contractors this time.

Commissioner Amanda Masino: Could you explain a little bit about what happens after these firms are now approved to provide services, who provides what service, and what gets determined? What's the process?

Christine Whitney responds: You start with the person that was ranked the highest, and they have the first opportunity to propose work. In the standard city process, there are prime firms and they have created a team of firms. Not necessarily one firm can complete the entire scope of services that we need. If we're going to recycle land and buildings, we might need asbestos. Sometimes environmental factors interfere, or we might need a specific firm with additional knowledge. The contractor will build a team and they respond to the solicitation and then we rank them, and this is part of that process. The five top ranked firms are now going to move forward. Once you have them under contract (the five firms) then you rotate them.

Commissioner Ian Steyaert asks: At the expected run rate, how long is this, would this potentially last a year or five years (the full duration), or how does that work?

Christine Whitney responds: Four to five hopefully

Commissioner Kaiba White moves for approval of the ARR Brownfields RFP, 2nd by Commissioner Ian Steyaert. Motion passes unanimously.

2b. Discussion and Action: Appoint Construction and Demolition Committee Chair

Chair Acuna states: Just to reiterate the committee itself consist of Amanda, Cathy, and Ian. What we're trying to do this evening is find a chair for this committee.

Do I hear any volunteers?

Commissioner Ian Steyaert volunteers to chair the Construction and Demolition Committee.

Chair Acuna moves to have Ian Steyaert chair the C&D subcommittee

Commissioner Cathy Gattuso 2nd the motion

Motion passes unanimously

2c. Multi-family Organic Collection Pilot roll-out—Selene Castillo

Selene Castillo speaks: As a reminder, the goal of the pilot is to inform future policy discussion about composting for Multi-family properties. To reach that goal, the pilot would allow staff to gather information from the properties and residents and start identifying what are the challenges or pain points, and best practices around composting for these types of properties.

To recap how we got here, the plan was to launch the pilot in March of 2020. As we all know our roads completely changed a year ago due to COVID. A few months of living in the COVID world, it became evident that it was not leaving soon. Staff started to brainstorm and plan for a relaunch to take place in FY21. Staff contacted properties to gauge overall interest in October of 2020. Based on those responses we plan to restart in 2021. March was originally set as a starting month. Due to the winter storm, which impacted everyone and still impacting several properties that were planning to participate will not be able to do so. We are anticipating about half the number of properties as originally planned. College Courts is expected to begin service soon. One key component to implementing this pilot is collecting data. Staff met with property management last February to gather baseline information. We talked about what could make sense in terms

of composting service and including an educational component for each property. The overall recommendations that we shared are listed here in terms of service. We were talking to them about starting small then increasing quantity as needed. To educate residents we recommended using already established communication channels versus forcing residents to use a new tool or new platform for this new service, and to continue engaging with residents on education throughout the service period to prevent contamination.

Staff will kick off the education effort by hosting live virtual presentations for each participating property. They will get the opportunity to hear about composting and ask questions. The sessions will be recorded and made available for those residents who are not able to attend or watch the live session. We also plan to invite the hauler that will be servicing their property to the information sessions. In case they would like to share any tips or guidance for the residents. The residents will receive kitchen compost collectors and compostable bags for their kitchen collectors. In terms of recruitment efforts and the original list of properties, hundreds of properties were contacted via email, phone, and in-person meetings. We also used our social media network and our hauler community to try getting properties interested in the pilot. We were able to get 10 properties. Since a few of the original properties are no longer available to participate staff is currently trying to find properties. We are focusing on established connections, the Austin Apartment Association, and social media to spread the word. We are interested in getting more properties included to increase the diversity of the Multi-family pool. In terms of next steps, the plan is to move forward with the five properties that we confirmed. They will get started on their service and while that's happening, staff will continue outreach to recruit more properties.

Commissioner Ian Steyaert: What is impeding these property managers from wanting to participate in the pilot?

Response: for those larger properties one of the main issues that property managers on-site run into is that they need to get it approved by corporate. So, if you think of all the large property management companies that you might see signs of around town, the property manager on-site can't make the decision. They have to take ideas up the chain to implement new ideas. With the pandemic and winter storm, several properties that originally planned to participate are no longer being willing or able to participate. From the initial pilot back in 2020 half are in and half are out. A lot of properties that we lost were those bigger communities with 200 plus units.

Commissioner Ian Steyaert: So it sounds like there's a matter of keeping incentives in place or some sort of continued encouragement now and really on an ongoing basis to make it worthwhile for them to sign up and then continue to maintain the program.

Chair Acuna asks: Cathy since you're chairing the committee, what's the ideal sample size? What would be the perfect number?

Commissioner Gattuso responds: We talked about 20 or something like that before. The goal was 20 and then once we started doing recruitment last year, we reached 10. Our realistic goal is to get back to 10 properties who are willing to participate in this pilot.

Chair Acuna states: This is a discussion and action item; we can defer this item to get an update in say 30 to 60 days.

2d. Discussion and Action: Safe Right of Way Clearance Accessibility for Weekly Vehicle Servicing Collection of Garbage, Recycling, and Composting containers from City of Austin Routes

Ron Romero speaks: This is Ron Romero Collection services with Austin Resource Recovery. We do have some talking points on this, but we would like to request til next month. We are awaiting some updates

numbers from Safety and information from Public Works. We would like to give you all a more detailed report and presentation next month.

Chair Acuna responds: If it be the will of this commission, I would like to give staff an opportunity to come back with some detailed information.

Unanimous, moved to April meeting.

3. Staff Briefings: *During the winter storm to share background and perspective on what staff has done. At the onset of the storm we had several members of our team assist the city in recovery by working at the EOC. We had folks that were working in logistics section and working in the comp section getting messaging out to folks across the city. We also had several people who worked at the airport, clearing snow and ice from the runways from the parking aprons, and the taxi ways. Part of the effort we had folks that came in and supported moving cots and blankets and pillows to the various warming centers and other shelters. They also came in to move meals. We shared or delivered thousands of meals across the city as part of the effort to help support the work that was happening across the city. We were a bit behind because of the storm and we've been working feverously to get caught up. The priority force was of course trash and compost. We managed to get caught up on that by working a tremendous number over hours over the weekend which put us behind on recycling. We spent quite a bit of time getting caught up there as well. Some of our customers were approaching a month without recycling service. We quickly pivoted to get caught up there. Now we are working feverishly to get caught up on all the storm debris, trees, brush, and so forth that is down. Our guys are working hard long hours over the weekends to pull together the effort in response to get caught up on that material. I just want to say I cannot share how much I appreciate what these guys are doing. They are just tremendous and getting work done across the entire department. It was a true testament of their professionalism that they all stepped up to contribute to the city's response during the winter storm.*

Commissioner Gattuso: The department responded phenomenally. When I watch in the neighborhood and talk to other people, they can't say enough about the amazing work done by the team.

Chair Acuna: A very commendable job to the department. Anybody who is in this industry understands the challenges that everyone faced, not just the City of Austin but anyone who is in this line of work was equally challenged, perplexed trying to figure out how we're going to get the job done. I saw you all working on Sundays doing what needed to be done. Thank you, staff.

Commissioner Melissa Rothrock: I want to congratulate ARR on the re-opening of the Recycle and ReUse Drop Off center. That's a very big deal and there's a lot of austinians that are very grateful for the reopening of that facility including myself.

4. Future Agenda Items:

- 1. Multi-family pilot update*
- 2. Safeway update*
- 3. Meeting of the C&D Subcommittee*

Commissioner Gattuso motions to adjourn the meeting 2nd by Commissioner Ian Steyaert
Unanimous

Meeting adjourned at: 7:13 pm

