



Zero Waste Advisory Commission

Meeting Minutes

May 12, 2021

The Regular Meeting of the Zero Waste Advisory Commission convened through Video Conference on Wednesday, April 14th, 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/120800>

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Acuna called the Commission Meeting to order at 6:03pm

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

Board Members not in Attendance: Janis Bookout

Staff in attendance via WebEx: Ken Snipes, Richard McHale, Tammie Williamson, Amy Slagle, Mike Lewis, Victoria Rieger, Ron Romero, Brent Paige, Jason McCombs, Natalie Betts, Selene Castillo, Marcus Gonzalez, Shana Riviello, Amy Schillerstrom, Young Park, and Dwight Scales

Chair Acuna opened with comments.

1. APPROVAL of the April 14, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Chair Acuna entertained a motion to approve the April 14th Meeting minutes. Commissioner Melissa Rothrock made the first motion for approval of the minutes. A second motion was provided by Commissioner Ian Steyaert

Item passed Unanimously

2a. Discussion and Action: Truck and Hauling Services RCA- Victoria Rieger and Amy Slagle

Victoria Rieger Division Manager of Austin Resource Recovery Finance states: The RCA here is dealing with a Truck and Hauling Service Contract. This is an RCA for a multi- department item. You've got the cover sheet that was submitted. There's some detailed information. I'm going to council on the 20th and we're here to seek your approval for the authorization to take this to council. This is a three-year contract for truck hauling services to be used by Public Works, Watershed, and Austin Resource Recovery.

Commissioner Ian Steyaert asks: How will ARR use the Truck hauling service contract? Does this fall in line with previous budgets? Is this as expected in terms of rate of increase or is it the same as it has been in the past?

Amy Slagle Litter Abatement Division Manager responds: We will utilize the hauling services contract to help move our organic material. During our heave season, over the last seven to eight weeks, we experienced about a 60% increase in our compost materials from the winter storm. We were experiencing severe delays on our collection routes. It was taking us around seven and a half to eight days to collect the five-day cycle. So we utilized the Holland contract to help get the material to Organics by Gosh and keep our trucks or return our truck to the route quicker versus calling the dump site. This is the first time we've ever utilized that contract. It was done out of absolute necessity. So, this is an out of budget expense at this point. This was specifically for winter storm cleanup.

Ken Snipes Director of Austin Resource Recovery speaks: Basically, what ends up happening is the contract allows us to expedite the type of service that we would need at that moment. So that we're not waiting until we have an emergency, or we have a need to try to create a contract, which takes a period of time. This creates the contract upfront and if we need to use it, we've designated amount of authority that we could use up to a certain amount that has been approved. So, any of the departments up to the authority that they designated would be able to use that contract.

Commissioner Amanda Masino states: It does look like there was a bid that was lower. I'm also wondering with the lowest cost was not the one awarded. On PDF Item 21-1857 Truck Hauling It's a slightly different format of this.

Commissioner Kaiba White asks: How many trucks are going to be available? You know the reason that I was asking about the number of trucks that are expected to be available is I'm wondering if any analysis has been done to examine whether or not contracting is preferable to buying some number of trucks and operating them with city employees?

Richard McHale Deputy Director speaks: For ARR our need is seasonal. It didn't always make sense for us to buy the additional equipment and staff to have them on call. For us it was a better deal to create a contract to do the job. As far as the number of trucks, typically in situations like this contractor, if they don't have enough trucks usually work together. If they have big projects and to bring on new trucks, I think in our case at most we would ever need, if we are running some sort of transfer operation would be five or six trucks at any one time to just move material. It's not a good reason for us to go and purchase trucks. As we continue to move forward towards the northeast service center, and look for a little relief there, we're not trying to look for things that we're not needing on a full-time basis if we have a contract.

Commissioner Cathy Gattuso responds I think this might be a good agenda item, so we can discuss this on what is part of the solicitation process and how can we recommend some things in the future.

Commissioner Amanda Masino moves to approve the RCA for Truck Hauling Service. A 2nd motion was made by Commissioner Cathy Gattuso. Motion passes unanimously.

2b. Discussion and Action: Revisit Homelessness Challenges—Director’s Office

Ken Snipes Director ARR speaks: This is a quick update on what’s going on with the Homelessness. We were asked to come back and share some of the things that we’re seeing or experiencing right now. As we were pulling this together Prob B passed and went into effect as of yesterday. Prob B prohibits camping in the city and around the UT area. It also prohibits sitting in a line in public. A team’s been pulled together to kind of focus on homelessness. We convene weekly in a city-wide meeting. Basically, every department has a representative. There we discuss activities that are going on, we provide updates across the spectrum of all the activities that various departments are performing. We also convene in a second meeting a little less frequently. In that meeting we call it our planning meeting. There are fewer departments there that represent the makeup of that group. It includes for example the major project departments that are performing work, ARR Public Works, PARD, Law etc. We discuss things that are either problems right now or things that we’re seeing. We also discuss updates, problems, we’re addressing which might include fires. There’s been quite a bit of concern about fires and encampments. We’re seeing those more and more. A concern has been raised as people start to move around does that increase the fire risk out in the community in our wooded areas. So, we’re working on some of those issues and trying to do what we can to be responsive in those spaces. Another thing that we’ve been working on is where we were on the Violet Cart Keep Safe Program. We transitioned that program over to downtown Austin Community Court as of yesterday. We just learned that the program has 170 people using it. So, it’s been very beneficial. They have the capacity to support 300 people in that space. Another program that we’ve been working on is the Violet Cart Program. We took over that project from Watershed Protection when we took that program over, there were approximately four sites. We’ve since expanded that to 48 sites. The sites roughly mirror the locations that public works services through their cleaning contracts. Our folks are out servicing those daily. Some sites we service 3 times per day. That is the only way to keep up with the material that is generated in those areas. We also created an encampment cleaning team. It’s a small team of 6 people who go and clean up around the Violet bag locations. As we know that camping is banned in the city, we’re getting a lot of questions about mitigation strategies as people start to move around. Over the next 90 days we plan to have a weekly assessment of all the work happening on the homelessness front to determine where people are moving, and how we meet the needs. If people transition from one under pass to another, we’re looking to be agile and flexible in the services that we provide in those locations. We’re still waiting to see if that means that people will eventually move into the wooded areas or the brushy areas.

Chair Gerry Acuna asks: Is there going to be additional funding that may come down from city hall to help support this?

Ken Snipes Director ARR responds: We’re still playing that by ear. We’re trying to get a better understanding of what the cleanup work will look like. What I anticipate and can tell you is that it’s much more expensive to clean up in wooded areas than it is under the overpasses. We have equipment coming for our team. We’re not fully pulsed on the equipment yet. It’s hard for us to determine exactly what the workload was going to be because we’ll probably change some things in terms of people moving around and where we may see debris. The plan right now is to assess weekly, to see where we need to pivot and to try to be as agile as possible so that we don’t have situations where we have large numbers of people that are without adequate support.

Commissioner Kaiba White states: I'm very disappointed that Prop B passed you know for the additional challenges that it's going to cause for everyone experiencing homelessness and everybody trying to lend assistance. I know that there is some contemplation of designating camping areas and I realize that's kind of a policy decision that will be made by council. Do you have any insight, is that something that's likely still under consideration?

Ken Snipes Director ARR responds I would imagine over the next few weeks or so more information will come out on that in terms of what the plans are. No major breaking news on that front just yet. In closing I want to thank staff who have stepped up and worked in this space. They've been amazing in terms of pivoting and flexing to do whatever the need is and still managing to get their regular day to day work done.

2c. Discussion and Action: C&D Meeting Report Review-Commissioner Ian Steyaert

Citizen Jeffrey Jacoby speaks I wanted to highlight 2 things that were kind of surprising to me.

- 1. The RCI Certification allows for burning for fuel recycled, the "recyclable materials," and considers that diversion. It allows for alternative daily cover at landfills for the C&D waste and it calls that recycling. This runs in direct conflict with the Zero Waste Plan which explicitly states that incinerating for fuel is not considered diversion. Yet the C&D portion of the C&D Recycling Ordinance allows that certification to stand.*
- 2. Sometime in 2019, you all passed a resolution explicitly opposing the expansion of the landfill near Bergstrom and a lot of C&D waste going there. We're very confident that what's happening is that it's not being handled in a way that we as a city would consider environmentally sound.*

I think it would be best if we focus on doing it right, rather than just getting the percentage up. If we were only diverting 50% but it's being handled in such a way that we're harming communities where the wood burned in a biomass incinerator, and of course polluting the climate as well in the process.

Commissioner Ian Steyaert begins the presentation: During the C&D Sub-committee meeting we had the attendees the commissioners, and citizens communicate. As you heard, there were speakers from a local certified recycling business talking about some of their key points. They think that everyone needs to be certified. They spoke about wood as fuel, the need for additional enforcement, and there was also a representative for an industry organization and a non-profit. There were questions from Commissioner Gattuso about getting more information from staff about the viability and necessity for doing that and how it fits into our overall plan. We approved the minutes from the last meeting in 2017. It seems like not that much has moved in the last four years in some ways. It was interesting to see the same topics discussed then and now. We're looking forward to making some headway there soon. Ms. Castillo discussed the bylaws to help lay some of the groundwork for our commission. Ms. Nelson talked about the ordinance. There are discussions within ARR staff who is working on coming up with additional methods of enforcement. In the current market, it's tough to accept certain types of materials. There's a lot of contamination. We're trying to get a meeting set up for June to accelerate the information a little more frequently that's necessitated by the ordinance. We will not be able to do video of those meetings, but we will have audio recordings available after each meeting.

3a. Staff Briefings

1. Winter Storm Uri Debris Removal Update-Mike Lewis

Mike Lewis Litter Abatement Assistant Division Manager speaks: Good evening commissioners, this is a brief update on Winter Storm Uri collection efforts. As we know the week of February 19th, we suspended all of collections due to the storm. As you can see the comparisons from the previous years for brush and organics, we increased almost 80% and composting increased almost 60%. As we returned for collections, we received assistance from Pard, and Watershed to help remove the debris. Based on the heat map displayed you can see that a majority of the calls came from northwest Austin and west of 3t. We also contracted with DRC Grid Removal and Tetra Texh to collect debris. We've calculated approximately 1700 Tons of debris removed to date.

Commissioner Jonathan Barona asks I have a question about the debris map, does this map only show where people were asking for help. I know that they're more heavily "treed," on that side of town, but I'm just curious if you had any insight on that distribution?

Amy Slagle Litter Abatement Division Manager responds: The reason for that is because the debris was concentrated in the Northwest quadrant of Austin. About 20% of our call volume was from one brush route and they had close to 1000 calls. It was severely impacted in district 10 and district 6 in terms of debris removal. The contractors, ARR team, Pard, and Public Works teams spent most of the time in this area.

2. Circular Plastics Initiatives-Progress Updates-Natalie Betts

Natalie Betts Circular Economy Program Manager speaks: Good evening commissioners. I'm here to share with you some updates on several different plastics initiatives that we're working on and share some progress updates. I'll talk through some international, national, and state level efforts that we are working on to kind of bring together stakeholders across the plastics value chain. Before I do that, I want to level set on where we are today. As you all likely know we have curbside recycling for all rigid plastics. We also have drop off recycling for plastic film, foam at our recycling and reuse drop offs, or litter abatement and street sweeping crews keep tons of debris off our streets that also prevent plastic from getting into our waterways through our Universal Recycling Ordinance. We are providing recycling access for plastic waste, at businesses for employee tenants. We also have the Austin Reuse Directory which provides residents with information on where they can donate reusable plastic items and all kinds of other reusable items. Every year, we host something called the ReVerse Pitch competition which was launched where several businesses that make new materials, new products out of by-product materials that are coming from businesses in Austin. Recently several of those businesses that have launched have focused on post industrial plastic waste and making those into new products like planters, and other small items that can be purchased here in Austin. The Watershed Protection department is also starting a

study on quantifying the volume and the sources of trash in our creeks. We've also signed on to commitments with the New Plastics Economy Global commitment and the U.S Plastics Commitment. The new plan six economy global commitment is an effort from Ellen MaCarther Foundation and the environment program. It's an effort to unite stakeholders across the globe on a vision for a circular economy for plastics. The new plastic economy global commitment is motivated in large part by the problem of plastics in the ocean. Austin is not a coastal community, but we know that the plastic that ends up in the ocean starts from land. A recent study in science found that up to 34 million metric tons of plastic waste enter our aquatic ecosystem every year. A significant majority of that comes from land-based sources. We here in Austin have a big responsibility. The Ellen MaCarthur foundation has also predicted by 2050 if we stay on our current trajectory there could be more plastic than fish in the ocean, and that plastics share of global oil consumption and the carbon budget would grow significantly. That's the motivation for this commitment, it also aligns with our zero waste goals. We are committing to launch a circular economy research and development initiative likely in partnership with local universities to support innovation across the circular economy including circular packaging. We are working on a citywide waste diversion study this year and that will also tell us a capture rate for plastics. How much of the recyclable and compostable plastic is being recycled and composted and put into those streets? We'll know by next year, what our current capture rate is to give us a baseline. And then from that baseline we'll be able to set what our target to hit by 2025 should be. There are several different packs across the globe that are taking the global commitment and kind of bringing it down to the county level. ARR joined as a founding activator. The plastics pact has set four ambitious targets to reach again by 2025:

- 1. Elimination of problematic or unnecessary plastics*
- 2. Ensuring that all plastic packaging is 100% reusable, recyclable, or compostable*
- 3. Effectively recycling or composting at least 50% of plastic packaging*
- 4. Recycled content or responsibly sourced bio-based content*

The goal is to ensure that reached 30% of plastic packaging by 2025 timeline. ARR joined this and signed onto those targets and to support working for those targets collaboratively. As a founding activator, we are also an inaugural advisory council member. We represent local government on the advisory council for this initiative. The main thing happening under this plastic pack is the development of a roadmap. The roadmap will outline things like key activities, roles, responsibilities, timelines, and that will be available later this year. In addition to these big picture global and national efforts, we also recognized a need for a statewide convening. We brought it down to the statewide level and partnered with the state of Texas Alliance for Recycling to host the Texas Plastics Summit just last week. This was a two-hour virtual workshop where we brought together over 40 stakeholders. It included retailers, Murph reclaimer manufacturers, educational institutions. The focus of the event was to identify long and short-term collaborative actions that the group of stakeholders could takt to reduce plastic waste. We had speakers and broke into breakout groups. The groups were asked to identify wat does success mean in this area, and how they could individually contribute to it and where might they need support and help. A follow-u[event will be held in November to discuss what we need to do next.

Commissioner Cathy Gattuso comments: I am overwhelmed with all of the positives from this presentation. I'm wondering is it possible to get a group together as commissioners to contribute?

Commissioner Kaiba White states: for the multi-family composting I see that more have dropped off the list. Can we still try to recruit or is it closed?

Jason McCombs Environmental Conservation Program Manager states: yes, we are still actively recruiting. The process will continue through August. We will take your suggestions.

ZWAC APPROVED