



**Solid Waste Advisory Commission  
Recycling Ordinance Reform Subcommittee**

October 14, 2009, 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

City Hall, 301 West 2nd Street, Austin, Texas  
Boards and Commission Room

**APPROVED -- MEETING MINUTES**

**Sub-Committee Members:**

Rick Cofer (chair)

Maydelle Fason

J.D. Porter

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

- a. Introduction of the Solid Waste Advisory Commission Subcommittee Members  
All commissioners present
- b. Inform audience of process and rules

**2. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION**

The first (4) speakers signed up will each be allowed a three-minute allotment to speak.  
None.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Approve minutes from September 23, 2009 subcommittee meeting  
Commissioner Porter motioned to approve, Commissioner Cofer seconded. Motion passed on a vote of 2-0-1 with Commissioner Fason abstaining.

**4. REGULAR AGENDA (Discussion and Possible Action)**

- a. Presentation from Commercial Stakeholders, including but not limited to representatives from:
  - i. Office building/property management firms
  - ii. Grocers/Retailers
  - iii. Restaurants
  - iv. Hotels/Entertainment
  - v. Other

Summary: Ronnie Volkening from the Texas Retailers Association spoke on efforts by retailers and grocers to reduce and recycle plastic bags. He explained that several major retailers were involved in the effort to reduce plastic bag consumption and improve plastic bag recycling rates. Participants in the effort experienced 40% reduction in plastic bags consumed at grocery stores with a 20% increase in the amount of plastic bags recycled.

Commissioner Cofer clarified that the intent of the recycling ordinance would be to require properties to recycle and potentially even compost food waste. He asked if there was a fair way to categorize services such as using gross sales as a way to determine which entities would be subject to a universal recycling ordinance.

Mr. Volkening stated that SIC codes and gross sales were one way to determine applicability, but wanted to touch base with his membership to discuss the options. Mr. Volkening further stated that broad based education would be essential to any program and or ordinance.

Kyle Gillman with the Building Office Managers Association stated that among the properties with 100 employees or more and 100,000 square feet recycling definitely works and could probably be expanded to include all four materials such as plastic bottles and aluminum. There is not a lot of glass in many of the buildings. However, among smaller buildings, there are a few concerns: (1) high cost to haul materials, with the cost split among fewer tenants; (2) limited space for recycling containers – interior and exterior; (3) no staffing on site to manage/monitor containers; (4) mixed use/office/condo projects are unique because each unit is the owner and this creates logistical problems.

Commissioner Cofer asked which metrics would be most appropriate to use – square footage; employees; occupancy load; or employees.

Mr. Gillman explained that employees was the most appropriate because it would provide a consistent number to determine generation of recyclables and waste. Square footage can be really high with a small number of employees.

Commissioner Cofer explained that the group had discussed if it would help if there were a certain threshold that would give properties access to city services.

Mr. Gillman explained that properties under 100,000 sq ft do not have on-site management or janitorial crews. Tenants with no on-site management would be difficult. But, he added that some properties (40,000 sf and 25,000 sf) made the decision to provide recycling and do have access. Additionally, some smaller properties didn't have space for a dumpster to provide service.

Commissioner Porter asked if re-striping the property to decrease parking or increasing impervious cover allowance would help.

Mr. Gillman explained that the cost would be one born by the property owner and that re-striping would not likely help. People have large cars and would end up using two spots instead of squeezing into the spots available. Then a larger parking problem would result. But, increasing impervious cover allowance could possibly help.

Commissioner Cofer explained that it seemed that the properties above 100 threshold were fine – perhaps a few tweaks need – and that perhaps the smaller properties could obtain service from the city or via drop offs, but that there seems to be this “in between” group that needed to be resolved. Commissioner Cofer asked Mr. Gillman to return to his membership and get more clarity on the following: (1) where would BOMA draw the line in property size if the City of Austin were to provide service; (2) what is the best form to capture the “in between” properties; (3) what are the challenges for the “in between” properties to implement on-site recycling; (4) which would be preferred – parking changes or increase in impervious cover to dedicate to recycling.

Bill Brice with the Downtown Austin Association explained the type of recycling currently provided via the City's downtown waste management contract. He further explained that the primary concerns are (1) space – internal and external to the property; (2) processes such as documentation; (3) cost to users and tenants. Above all, Mr. Brice explained that whatever ordinance or program is to be put in place must be easy, accessible, and cost effective. He pointed to the City's residential single stream recycling program and pointed out that it is "not enforced, but people do it."

Mr. Brice asked the commissioners to consider recycling from a materials perspective instead of a volume or number of people perspective. Target education towards those materials and show how important it is to recycle/reuse those materials rather than throw them away. Furthermore, composting could be possible too as long as the program were easy, accessible, and cost-effective. Additionally, in terms of measuring success, Mr. Brice asked what the goal was. Is it the participation rate or decreasing waste or increasing diversion?

Josh Allen with the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Austin Association added to Mr. Brice's presentation by explaining that public education is critical. He would recommend evaluating (1) how the materials would have to be separated and if the MRF could handle the method of separation; (2) focus on key materials; (3) composting by starting with a pilot program first.

Commissioner Cofer asked why there were not more properties involved in city's pilot glass recycling program.

Mr. Allen explained that it was normally a staffing issue due to separation and lack of space in each business.

- b. Discuss possible revisions to the ordinance affecting (non-residential) commercial stakeholders.

Commissioner Porter suggested looking into cumulative compliance where a property owner with multiple properties could be given credit for compliance shared among all properties/businesses owned. Concept could be loosely based on carbon credits.

Commissioner Fason thought that cumulative compliance would be confusing and "a lot of math." She explained that she was interested in exemptions for spaces for older entities either via increase in space, parking, or impervious cover. In all, Commissioner Fason opted for keeping it simple.

Commissioner Cofer suggested continuing the discussion further and items that seemed to stick out to him were plan form requirements; reporting (if at all); annual reporting vs quarterly reporting; online reporting access. Also, if consider creating a reporting exemption if the property is receiving city services.

## 5. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Multi-family properties and institutions will present. Report on success/challenges of glass recycling pilot program. Discuss November meetings between Nov. 17<sup>th</sup> to Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## 6. ADJOURN at 4:45pm