

CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE
Committee on Sustainability and Transportation
Councilor Andrew Zarro (D4), Chair
Councilor Victoria Pelletier (D2)
Councilor Roberto Rodriguez (At-Large)

Minutes April 13, 2022

Members Present: Councilor Zarro, Councilor Pelletier, Councilor Rodriguez

Staff Present: Troy Moon, Alex Marshall, Erin Ferrell, Dena Libner, Jeff Tarling

Meeting called to order.

March 23 Minutes

Councilor Pelletier moves to approve the January meeting minutes. Councilor Zarro seconds the motion. January minutes passed unanimously, 3-0.

Sustainability Update

Presented by Troy Moon

Erin conducted two training sessions for property owners who are required to submit their energy data as part of our Energy Benchmarking program. They were well attended and participants had many good questions. Erin continues to work with property owners to help them complete their reports with the help of PCAT members. Electrify Everything! continues to make progress. We have made contact with 33 people through our form and residents have also been reaching out to ReVision directly.

Committee Comment on Sustainability Update

Councilor Zarro asks about the energy benchmarking report deadline. Benchmarking reports are due May 1. The Sustainability Office along with PCAT volunteers are helping building owners complete and submit their reports. Over 400 residents completed the survey and offered valuable recommendations about potential drop off locations, feedback about locations, and input about how much they have come to value the composting program.

Composting Program Update

Presented by Troy Moon

According to the Portland Food Waste Composition Study in 2015, 40% of Portland trash was actually food and green waste. One Climate Future sets the goal for Portland to be a waste free community by 2050. Reducing food waste is one of the most significant things people can do to reduce their personal carbon footprint.

Portland currently has 5 community compost drop sites. In order to improve the program, the office has been requesting input from residents. Results show the following:

- Most sites have been used regularly with the exception of Riverside Recycling location.
- The carts were usually not too full.
- Sites have been kept clean.
- Most respondents were not subscribing to the curbside services.
- Those that canceled subscription services did so because they were too expensive.

- All respondents wanted the program to continue.
- Suggested locations include: Parkside, North Deering, Deering Center, Payson Park area.

Based on feedback, the office is working to expand to more drop off locations at Payson Park Garden, Riverton Garden, and Brentwood Garden. We are working on finding locations in Parkside and North Deering. Clark St Garden location will be moved and Riverside Recycling location was removed.

Responses for the RFP for Curbside Collection program is due at the end of April. We hope to partner with a company to offer a reduced rate subscription service to Portland residents. Hope to launch this in early June. The office is also working to translate compost drop site signs to multiple languages.

Public Comment on Composting Update

Maggie Wolf asks how many people use curbside services and would be interested to see more businesses using curbside pickup options. Appreciation for the curbside program and . Backyard composting may be difficult in this climate.

Jo Coyne lives next to Clark St garden and appreciates moving the Clark St garden location. Suggests moving that drop site to the community center wall.

Councilor Comment on Composting Program Update

Councilor Rodriguez:

Why does Reike school disapprove of adding a compost drop site at their location? *They are concerned about traffic, litter, and the construction.* Why was their low usage of the Riverside recycling station drop site? *They are open for limited hours and there is usually a line.* It could have been associated with a cost due to the location. What support or program could we give to residents with more space to compost at home? *We can promote that as an option and create educational materials for how to get started.* What amount of our food waste is produced by North Deering-like area versus more dense neighborhoods? *On- and off- peninsula had similar amounts of food waste when we had a waste composition survey completed.* Does the rfp have language about how the waste has to be used? *Agricycle collects the scraps from our carts. They take scraps to Exeter where there are 3 aerobic digesters on a dairy farm. Food scraps are mixed with cow manure and digest it to create gas that creates renewable energy to sell to the grid. The digestate is used to fertilize the farm fields used to feed the cows. It is an innovative complete closed loop system.* The requirement in the rfp requires the company to take the scraps to a facility certified by the state to create compost? *The requirement is that the company needs to bring the food scraps to a DEP licensed facility which could be a digester or compost facility.*

Councilor Pelletier:

Excited that the text is getting translated and lowering the curbside price makes it more accessible. Has there been discussion of expanding to Peaks Island? *It is logistically difficult but*

we are not working on it currently. Is there any further talk about joint effort with the schools? Many schools do have food composting in the cafeterias and that is something we can work towards. Where are we looking for a location in Parkside? We are working with Parks Dept to find a location and it is a big priority due to the density of the neighborhood.

Councilor Zarro:

Asks that the rfp responses be shared back with the committee.

Emerald Ash Borer

Presented by Jeff Tarling

Over the past decade the Emerald Ash Borer has devastated ash tree populations across many parts of the eastern part of the country. States such as Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois have been particularly affected. Federal, State, and local foresters have been tracking the spread of this invasive pest and have recently discovered them in Maine. The Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Department has been working closely with the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry to develop a strategy to address this situation.

The City's tree inventory has documented over 600 ash trees along the street or in parks:

Portland's Street & Public Grounds Ash trees

2" to 12" - 441

13" to 23" - 135

24"+ - 27

Unknown dbh - 6

Total - 609

Damage to these trees will be a significant blow to the tree canopy. There are many hundreds of Ash trees along the Presumpscot River that would be affected. Although we are about 3-5 years from seeing large scale effects, it is important to know this is happening.

The committee can give guidance on how much intervention we want to give to protect the trees. This would include using chemicals. Preventative treatment options would cost about \$10/inch. It is important to improve the public relations aspect so that residents do not panic and try to protect their trees that may not be ash trees. Educational materials are on the Parks and Rec website.

Councilor Comment on Emerald Ash Borer Presentation

Is the Farmers Market moving again due to browntail moth infestation? *There will be a communication shared with the Council soon. They will move again but lessen the amount of time.* Councilor Zarro asks that the Committee be updated as there are developments.

Councilor Rodriguez asks if the tree replacement approach should be revisited and be more aggressive? *Jeff recommends being aware of grant programs. There are examples of tree replacement programs for private trees where volunteers help to recommend appropriate tree replacements. We will probably will need more funding to address the tree replacements.*

Bird Safe Glass

Presented by Nicholas Lund and Addy Smith-Reiman

Maine Audubon and the Portland Society for Architecture have collaborated in recent years to document increased bird mortality in Portland, particularly along the waterfront where we have seen construction of buildings with large walls of glass. Bird Safe Maine was started in partnership with Portland Society for Architecture and USM.

Thousands of birds migrate through Portland each day. With many buildings having glass walls and large glass windows, birds are dying after colliding with the glass. There are many solutions to cut down on the reflection of glass including using etched glass, or fritted glass, acid etched glass, or using ultra violet light strips in glass. Birdsafe Maine works with PSA to educate architects about the issue.

The fourth season of bird strike monitoring is about to start in Portland. Volunteers follow a designated path each day in the early morning to count and identify birds that have struck buildings/windows. Cities have passed ordinances that require new buildings to install birdsafe glass to address this issue.

Councilor Comment on Bird Safe Glass Presentation

Councilor Pelletier asks if there will be a time when developers will know about these issues without this level of advocacy? *Nick Lund agrees it can be done but it takes real broad education and regulatory efforts. Addy adds that the industry is changing and costs of birdsafe glass are coming down. What engagement is happening with young people? Bird Safe Maine is working to do more outreach with schools.*

Councilor Rodriguez asks for clarification on where education materials can be found. *American Bird Conservancy (abc.org) has a lot of educational materials to reference to understand the issue.*

Councilor Zarro asks Troy and the Sustainability Office to look at how a Bird safe glass ordinance would look and start research into what a Lights Out program could look like in Portland.

Councilor Rodriguez motions to adjourn the meeting. Meeting Adjourned.