

Resource Recycling Advisory Commission
Meeting of August 27, 2018
Middletown Senior Center, 7 PM

Members Present: Izzy Guy, Alison Johnson, Darrell Gagnon, Robin Hansen, Monica Belyea,
Member of the Public Present: Raffie Bianco

The minutes of the July 23 meeting were approved without additions or corrections. The commissioners moved on to a discussion of the problems caused by plastic drinking straws and bags in the environment. It was mentioned that banning straws altogether would pose problems for persons with disabilities. Mr. Gagnon showed a photo of a huge straw sale at Ikea, perhaps motivated by the adverse publicity straws have received lately. Ms. Guy showed off her slip-on shoes made of recycled plastic soda bottles, completely washable and comfortable to wear. (Mr. Gagnon suggested that if the soda in question had been of the diet variety, the wearer could hope to lose weight.)

The chair reported that the 21st-Century Parks Committee was about to decommission itself, the Pat Kidney Field and WWMS fields being completed. She also reported that Rebecca MacLachlan had seen City workers or contractors spraying herbicides at the site of a new sidewalk.

Discussion moved to the Recycling Center. One member reported that the Swap Shack's exterior was delaminating and needed attention. Mention was made of the new sign, which prohibits furniture and objects left outside. The question was raised: Has the Recycling Center been cleaned up, or has nature done her part to cover debris with weeds?

Discussion of the Open Air Market ensued. It was remarked that the free water bottles had been very much appreciated and that we should renew the supply. Ms. Johnson expressed reservations about amount of effort we expend as volunteers at the Market; she noted that people get the message that recycling and composting is complicated, and tend to get turned off. Ms. Guy reported being thanked and smiled at by about 70% of those with whom she interacted; we agreed we needed some kind of identifiable garb or badges. Mr. Gagnon stressed the need to be an "educator" and non-threatening. The group discussed whether better signage would help, as well as more training for the volunteers. Ms. Guy regretted the volume of plastic knives and forks being used. Ms. Belyea said she had helped people sort their waste and did find it very complicated. The smoothie vendors had run out of compostable lids, and the Italian ice vendors had compostable cups but non-compostable spoons. The suggestion was made that the Mansion should routinely require the vendors to characterize the sustainability of their operations. Another suggestion, made by Mr. Bianco, was that the Mansion could supply the utensils and add a charge to the exhibitors' fee.

The discussion turned to the staffing of the Department of Planning, Conservation and Development. The group discussed the large development on Washington St. Concerns were expressed as to whether proper enforcement was taking place.

In connection with the upcoming repair café, it was suggested that flyers be distributed at Townwide Tag Sale through Holy Trinity & Estate Treasures.

Ms. Guy suggested making up a feedback form for suggestions & reactions to the café; Ms. Johnson suggested providing a URL for a survey, which we could tabulate. It should be available at each repair station.

Ms Hansen reported that Kim O'Rourke had done an interview at her radio station, airing on 8/29 at 3:15, 12:13, and 4:49.

Respectfully submitted,
Krishna Winston, Chair, RRAC