



Minutes of the Oberlin City Council Joint Work Session

Held on November 15, 2010

6:45 P.M.

President Sloane called the Work Session to order at 6:45p.m. The purpose of the work session was to discuss recycling program changes recommended by the Resource Conservation and Recovery Commission.

Members Present: Sharon Soucy, Scott Broadwell, Bryan Burgess, Charles Peterson, Kate Pilacky, Kenneth Sloane

Members Tardy: Elizabeth Meadows

Staff Present: Belinda Anderson, Clerk of Council; Eric Norenberg, City Manager; Jeff Baumann, Public Works Director

Others Present: Resource Conservation and Recovery Commission (RCRC) members: Will McCracken, James Kalyn, John Picken, and Bob Coan

Will McCracken, Chair of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Commission, introduced James Kalyn and John Picken as the presenters of the proposed recycling program.

Kalyn provided Council with a general overview of the proposed changes noting that in reviewing current recycling practices in Oberlin, it was revealed that the percentage of eligible waste that gets recycled compared to regional and national statistics, was unacceptably low. This practice seemed inconsistent with the goals of the commission and the community.

Current practice indicate that Oberlin recycles about 23% of its potential recyclables while the national average is at 33%, Participation rates average 50%-60% of households, depending on which segment of the community is being polled, and only 25% – 30% of households in Oberlin separate recyclables. When considering the objectives of the 1993 City of Oberlin Resource Recovery study that proposed the current system of recycling, they were well below the expectation of what that commission envisioned. Through much deliberation RCRC had ascertained that in order for the City to improve its track record, it would need to hire a solid waste recycling manager. This person would be responsible for researching and developing a program that would include timelines and specific target rates for improving recycling and source separation, developing action plans, and community training. The commission felt that having a person in a paid position of manager was essential to being able to enact the policy on a level that they believed to be necessary.

Burgess inquired as to why this position hadn't been filled since it had been created some years ago. Jeff Baumann, Public Works Director advised that he had previously served in this position but the responsibilities were later rolled into his duties when he was promoted, nine years ago.

Kalyn said that currently the City was only recycling plastic code numbers 1 and 2, when many communities were recycling codes 1 through 7. He felt this was a contributing factor to the City's 23% recycle rate. The new position would work to implement more of these codes into the City's practices in turn increasing its rate of recycle.

Soucy asked which of the recycling materials yielded the greatest monetary benefits. Baumann advised that cardboard had been relatively lucrative this year but it varied on a yearly basis.

Soucy asked how the City went about gathering cardboard from private residences. Baumann said the truck separates the cardboard from the other recyclables and is offloaded into the third-line refuse packer truck, the truck that is used to service commercial cardboard as well.

Broadwell asked why they weren't using plastic codes 3-7. Norenberg commented that Allied Waste, the collection facility they had been using, was only accepting codes 1 through 2 at this time.

Broadwell asked what the RCRC's conversation on comingling and mandatory recycling had been. Kalyn advised that the commission wanted mandatory recycling, but at this time they felt it was more important to get a position in place before moving forward, mandatory recycling could come later. He further advised that currently the College and Kendal comingling all of their recyclables because they believe it is the norm, which isn't true. There is a greater return on ones investment if the recyclables are separated.

Bob Coan, 256 Kendal Drive noted that both Kendal and Oberlin College did source separation for a long time. The College went to comingling for economic reasons. Kendal went to comingling because it was easier. He believed that the change back to comingling would not be as difficult as it seems. The trucks are set up for it with a little modification.

Pilacky commented that she used to work in a recycling facility and was happy to see that this was being discussed. She hoped that they could be a beacon for the rest of the communities in Ohio. She asked if the schools were recycling at its full potential at this time. Kalyn explained that he had been informed that the high school only recycled paper which surprised him, but the middle schools separates recyclables and holds curriculum on it as well.

McCracken, Chair of the RCRC commission said that the youth were the most important people to get involved in recycling, since they could still be taught. He advised that programs could be introduced into the high school curriculum as well, which was something that he was beginning to discuss with the schools.

Pilacky asked how were the downtown businesses doing with recycling? Liz Burgess, downtown merchant said that right now downtown could be a major stream in recycling but the commercial recycling bins were limited to paper and cardboard. She advised that merchants want to recycle more but there aren't any bins that will accommodate the volume especially from businesses that serve beverages, not to mention the City wouldn't have the means to pick up large quantities of glass if merchants were to recycle more.

John Picken, member of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Commission noted the constraints that the commission worked under in drafting its proposal. He further elaborated on costs associated with comingling recyclables, minimal expenses associated with hiring someone to fill the position, and benchmarks that the commission hoped to achieve if the proposal were approved.

In closing Sloane commented that he was very much in favor of the position and he hoped to see the program move forward.

Being that there was no further business to be addressed the work session adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Attest:

BELINDA B. ANDERSON, CMC
CLERK OF COUNCIL

KENNETH SLOANE
PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL

Approved: 12/06/2010

Posted: 12/07/2010