



City of Cambridge

CR # 7

IN CITY COUNCIL

May 20, 1991

COUNCILLOR DUEHAY

ORDERED: That the Environment Committee forward to the full City Council the report entitled User-fees And Residential Garbage Collection in Cambridge, Massachusetts by Ilana M. Locker with the recommendation it be referred to the City Manager for his review and comment.

In City Council May 20, 1991.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.

Attest:- Joseph E. Connarton, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph E. Connarton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'J' and 'C'.

Joseph E. Connarton, City Clerk



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City of Cambridge

The Environment Committee conducted a public hearing on Thursday, May 9, 1991 beginning at 5:35 p.m. in the Ackermann Room, City Hall.

Councillor Francis H. Duehay, Chair of the above referenced Committee convened the hearing and stated that the agenda for this evening's proceedings was to discuss a report entitled User-Fees And Residential Garbage Collection in Cambridge, Massachusetts prepared by Ms. Ilana M. Locker of the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. Present at the hearing were Councillor Sheila T. Russell and Deputy City Clerk John E. Flynn.

Councillor Duehay in his opening remarks noted the timeliness of the report given the City Manager's Budget Message for FY92 in which he identified some ten service areas, of which solid waste collection topped the list, that would be reviewed and recommendations would be forwarded to reduce expenditures in FY93. The Chair also noted Ms. Locker's educational and extensive environmental experiences on the local, state and international level in his introduction of her to the Committee. In his closing remarks, the Chair recommended to the Committee that the report be forwarded to the City Manager for his review and comment.

Ms. Locker began the presentation by providing an overview of the present solid waste program as well as the ever-present economic and regulatory constraints facing the City of Cambridge. In her presentation, she suggested one course of action, the imposition of user-fees to address both constraints. In her analysis, she advances the belief, that given the economic incentives provided by such fees, behavioral attitudes and habits will change on both the individual and municipality involved. Ms. Locker also noted the fact that user-fees are gaining more favor with municipalities given the property tax growth limitations imposed by Proposition 2 1/2 to fund city services.

As background information, Ms. Locker stated that in 1988 the tipping fee paid by the City to its private contractor equalled \$65.86 per ton. In 1991 it rose to \$78.96 per ton. The City presently collects from residential, commercial, school, church and housing project accounts.

Ms. Locker also provided the Committee with the criteria she employed in the determination of which program best-suited the needs of Cambridge. Such criteria ranged from administrative feasibility to flexibility to ease of customer compliance to cite a few examples. she imposed this set of criteria on the following programs under the consideration and implemented in other localities:

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1. Sticker system;
2. Subscription system with different sized cans;
3. Weight-based system;
4. Bag and tag system, and;
5. Punchcard system.

In the report, Ms. Locker provides a detailed description of each program as well as the evaluation of alternatives by criteria. Based on the results from the evaluation model, Ms. Locker recommended the Bag and Tag system as the most appropriate for Cambridge. According to the report, this system requires little administrative preparation, allows for quick feedback for residents, is one of the least expensive to implement, allows for greater flexibility for both the City and residents and seems to have the fewest enforcement problems associated with it.

Ms. Locker outlined to the Committee the various components of the program such as:

1. General characteristics of program - all City residents whose garbage is picked up by the Department of Public Works (DPW) would have to place the waste in special plastic bags.;
2. Type of Bag - bags should come in two sizes, 30 and 13 gallons and stand out;
3. Availability - bags would be available at local supermarkets, grocery stores and City Hall;
4. Treatment of Multi-Unit Buildings - would require special consideration both in implementation, workings and enforcement;
5. Low-income abatements - self explanatory;
6. Services for Schools and Churches - inclusion in program would allow for costs to be recouped;
7. Bulky Items - pick-up possible under this system for an additional fee;
8. Enforcement - requiring diligence on part of DPW staff and if necessary ordinances be drafted and ordained to ban dumping of waste and backyard burning; and
9. Commercial Accounts - the need to possibly reevaluate the present DPW policy as it relates to providing services to the commercial sector.

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The final piece of the program requires the calculation of the user fee either utilizing a one-tier or two-tier system. The former covers the total costs of refuse collection and disposal and the later where only the variable costs are covered by general revenues.

To conclude the presentation Ms. Locker recommended an eight point action to be performed prior to the implementation of a plastic bag user fee program. Most of the eight points are covered in the previously mentioned components of the program. The lone point deals with the education component.

Councillor Duehay thanked Ms. Locker for the report and presentation and then opened the floor for public comment.

Mr. Mark Corrales, 6 Day Street, suggested the combining of the sticker system with the bag and tag system where residents have the option of utilizing either a 30 gallon tin or a plastic bag.

Mr. Robert Winters, 366 Broadway, recommended that the city delay implementation of a bag and tag user fee until curbside recycling has been implemented, refined and fully operational.

Mr. Jack Martinelli, 171 Auburn Street, stated that he favored reducing the waste stream but not by inserting a regressive tax as had been proposed.

Ms. Locker, in response, stated that the proposed system will be self-paying and that the point of the program is that an individual pays for what he/she wastes.

Mr. James P. Maloney, Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs, expressed his congratulations to Ms. Locker and called the report a first step in the debate. He further stated that this area would be reviewed in great depth in the next six months and a recommendation would follow from the City Manager.

Councillor Duehay commented on the changing economic times whereby a year ago this discussion would not have taken place at this level of government. He concurred with Mr. Maloney on the report being a first step in the City's thinking process and asked the participants at the hearing to read the report and re-think it. He further stated that a new approach was needed in the field of waste management.

Councillor Duehay made the following motion:

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ORDERED: That the Environment Committee forward to the full City Council the report entitled **USER-FEES AND RESIDENTIAL GARBAGE COLLECTION IN CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS** by Ilana M. Locker with the recommendation it be referred to the City Manager for his review and comment.

The motion carried on a voice vote.

The hearing was adjourned at 6:45 p. m.

For the Committee,

Francis H. Duehay (ref)
Councillor Francis H. Duehay,
Chair

7. 8 S-693
COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report from the Committee on Environment
for a hearing held relative to discuss the
report entitled USER-FEES AND RESIDENTIAL
GARBAGE COLLECTION IN CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHU-
SETTS.

In City Council,

May 20, 1991

Report accepted
Order adopted