

November 10, 1992

147 Hampshire Street  
Cambridge  
Massachusetts 02139  
617-349-4800

Robert W. Healy  
City Manager  
City Hall  
795 Massachusetts Ave.  
Cambridge, MA 02319

Dear Bob:

I am responding to a request from your office for a description of the rationale behind our choice of enforcement method for the Mandatory Recycling Ordinance and of our plans for enforcement in the future.

The rationale behind the inspections of trash that we have carried out is that it enables us to identify with certainty the residents in a particular building that are not recycling. In contrast, in suburban communities with a high percentage of single family homes, households that are not recycling can be identified simply by observing over a period of time whether a recycling bin is set out in front of a home. In a community like Cambridge, however, where only 10% of the housing stock is single family homes, using a technique like this becomes much more complex and uncertain. Only 30-40% of the blue boxes that are set out on the curb have addresses with apartment numbers written on them. Therefore, if there is one unidentified blue box set out in front of a three family home, it is not clear who in the building is recycling and who is not.

A week of experience inspecting trash, however has revealed some serious disadvantages to this approach as well. Despite precautions such as sticks and puncture resistant gloves, it is difficult to carry out the process of inspection and documentation in a safe and sanitary manner. Secondly, residents have called to say that they feel that their privacy is invaded when city officials search through their trash.

For these reasons, we have rethought the option of monitoring for blue boxes. With some modifications, this technique can be used to identify non-participants through a process of elimination. By monitoring small sections of the City over a period of a month, we can identify people who are recycling by keeping records of the blue boxes that we see that do have addresses and



apartment numbers on them. We will leave stickers on boxes without addresses, asking people to address their box so that we can credit them for participation. As residents address their boxes, it will be possible to identify some non-participants in the same building through the process of elimination.

If, through the process of elimination, we are still not able to identify the non-participants in a building, we will send a warning letter to all the households in the building. The warning letter will indicate that anyone who receives the letter and is in fact recycling should address their recycling bin so that we can identify them. The same warning letter will describe for the benefit of non-participants what their responsibilities are vis-a-vis the recycling program and what the penalties are for non-compliance. On a second check at a later date, if non-participants are still not recycling, and participants have not addressed their blue boxes, it may be necessary to go through the trash to positively identify those who are not complying in order to issue a fine. This would be a last resort, however, and it is probable that the previous steps will net a fair amount of additional participation.

The disadvantages of enforcement by process of elimination are that it is more time-consuming overall than inspecting trash, and that it cannot eliminate uncertainty about whether some people are participating or not.

The advantages of this method are that DPW staff do not have to go through people's trash on a regular basis, and people do not feel that their privacy is being invaded. Secondly, although this method involves more time overall than inspecting people's trash, it allows us to monitor more households per unit time, so that we can have a better idea of what's going on in a larger portion of the City. Also, as a by-product of this process, we will have collected valuable data that allows us to calculate participation rates and other statistics to evaluate the success of the program in various parts of the City.

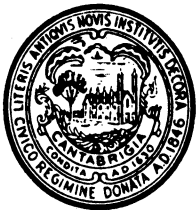
Based on an evaluation of our initial efforts to enforce the mandatory recycling ordinance by inspecting trash, and on a reexamination of other options, I am prepared to direct the enforcement staff to enforce the ordinance using the process of elimination method. Please notify me should you have any comments on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dave", written over a horizontal line.

David A. Haley  
Commissioner

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## CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL 349-4300

FAX 349-4307

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT  
ROBERT W. HEALY  
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI  
Deputy City Manager

November 16, 1992

To The Honorable, The City Council:

In response to information requested at the November 9, 1992 City Council Meeting, relative to enforcement method for the Mandatory Recycling Ordinance and plans for future enforcement, please find attached a response to this requested received from Public Works Commissioner David Haley.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy", is written over a horizontal line.

Robert W. Healy  
City Manager

RWH/mev  
attachments

Consent/Agenda # 4 S-9/62

Information requesting on enforcement  
method for the Mandatory Recycling  
Ordinance and plans for future enforcement.

In City Council,

November 16, 1992

*Placed on file*