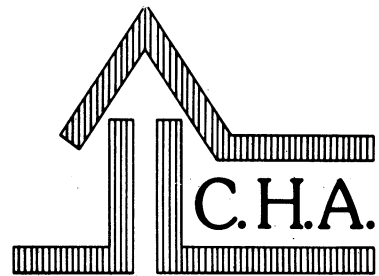


CAMBRIDGE HOUSING AUTHORITY



CAMBRIDGE
MASSACHUSETTS

02139

(617) 864-3020

December 13, 1976

Mr. James L. Sullivan
City Manager
City of Cambridge
City Hall
Cambridge, Mass. 02139

Dear Mr. Sullivan:

Thank you for forwarding to me a copy of Councillor David Clem's Council Order of November 15, 1976 concerning the burning of trash in incinerators at Putnam Gardens and Woodrow Wilson Court.

The problem of identifying an alternative mechanism for disposing of trash which would not impose other health and safety hazards to public housing residents and their neighbors, and would not constitute a further blight on the larger community, has plagued this Authority for a number of years. The conventional approaches to trash disposal which would normally be considered are two: 1) installation of compaction facilities; or 2) use of dumpsters.

The experience of most housing authorities with compaction equipment has been that the installation of such equipment in family public housing developments is prohibitively costly, and that once installed, the compaction units are inordinately expensive to maintain and unreliable. Little more than a year ago, at the direction of State air pollution control officials, the Authority moved to close the incinerators at Woodrow Wilson Court and provide waste disposal through the placement of a dumpster on the grounds of the development. In consequence, the majority of project residents and over 100 residents of the surrounding community signed a petition opposing the installation of a dumpster at Woodrow Wilson Court. After a meeting among residents, staff and State officials, the State withdrew their directive that the incinerators be closed immediately. It is interesting to note that many of the citizens of the surrounding community who signed the petition opposing the installation of a dumpster were among those who had previously signed petitions seeking the closing of the incinerators at Woodrow Wilson Court.

In search of another more constructive solution to the problem of waste disposal in Cambridge's public housing developments, the CHA, CEOC, the Cambridge Tenant Senate and the Technical Development Corporation, developed and received funding for a proposal for

Mr. James L. Sullivan
December 13, 1976
Page Two

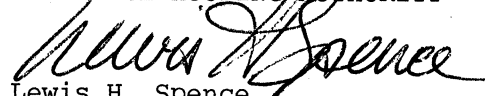
the establishment of a Resident Recycling Program for the disposal of waste. Residents' Recycling Inc. (RRI) has been operating for some six months and shows substantial potential for resolution of the waste disposal problem in a manner that provides employment for youths, increases convenience for residents, and would allow the closing of the Authority's incinerators. RRI is currently operating in Washington Elms, Newtowne Court and Jefferson Park. Over the course of the next six months, they expect to broaden their operations to those developments which they do not now serve. It is our hope that the Residents' Recycling Inc. Program will allow the Authority to close its various incineration facilities some time before the end of the 1977 calendar year without the health hazards and blighting influence of dumpsters.

I attach a recent article from the Cambridge Chronicle describing in some detail the operation of Resident's Recycling Inc.

Thank you for your interest in this matter.

Sincerely,

CAMBRIDGE HOUSING AUTHORITY



Lewis H. Spence
Executive Director

LHS:vn

Attachment

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CITY MANAGER

CHA incinerators smokin' but tenants aren't stokin'

By Mac Herrling

On any given sub-zero winter morning in the past, a resident of a Cambridge public housing project would have to tiptoe out into the snow to dump his papers and trash into the incinerator at the end of his building.

If he did so today at Washington Elms, Jefferson Park, or Newtowne Court, he would find a curious message attached to the incinerator wall: "Come On! Why leave the comfort of your home when Residents Recycling, Inc. could save you as much as

half the trips to the incinerator!"

So far anywhere from 50-75 percent of the Washington Elms tenants have heeded the warning, sat back, and let Residents Recycling Director Ordolfo DeLeo's crews take it away for the sake of ecology and the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA).

DeLeo's independent, tenant-run and operated recycling program is the barrier protecting the CHA from prosecution by the state.

During the summer, several state departments, including the Attorney General's office, became concerned over pollution caused by the CHA's 88 open-air incinerators and a larger number operated across the river by the Boston Housing Authority. Neither authority was in compliance with state air pollution regulations promulgated in 1970.

The Boston Authority has had difficulty complying and is experimenting with compacting methods to reduce its trash volume.

Unique proposal

However, the CHA, at the suggestion of tenants and sponsorship of CHA Executive Director Lewis H. Spence, proposed to the worried state a unique trade-off: Let the recycling program divert the tons of trash and eventually serve all projects on a permanent basis.

"They were enormously impressed, especially the Attorney General's office," recalls Spence who quickly received a pledge of support for the program, the only one of its kind in the state.

So far the program has recruited almost 50 high school youths from the projects and shown a successful rate of participation much higher than the average recycling program.

35 part-timers are paid \$2.30-\$2.35 an hr. to lug the glass, can, and papers to nearby dumpsters and provide residents with sealed trash cans to keep down the incidence of cockroaches and rats being attracted.

Others are given \$2.50 an hour to supervise and work full-time, while a secretary and bookkeeper are given on-the-job training.

Participation is high

DeLeo is pleased with the progress so far: "It's tremendous. The kids are employed and you're doing something for the environment. You should see the mornings when they burn

in the incinerators - the smell is terrible. Parents and kids are really enthusiastic about it (the recycling).

"We hope eventually to take in all 13 of the projects," he said.

The key to the economic success of the program, he says, is whether he can purchase his own dumpsters to keep the price going up for the recyclables RR collects.

While DeLeo never expects to turn any profit, he wants to develop work habits among the youth and "run the company as any private, profit-seeking corporation."

The only problem to date has been that of trying to dispose of the wet garbage that can not be recycled.

Residents Recycling does receive some funding from public sources and private foundations, but is not promised anything from the CHA or state for next year. Nevertheless, DeLeo hopes with some free consulting about the wet garbage problem (he says he will seek out MIT or others for advice) and continued support from tenants, RR will survive and flourish, he says.

State keeping an eye open

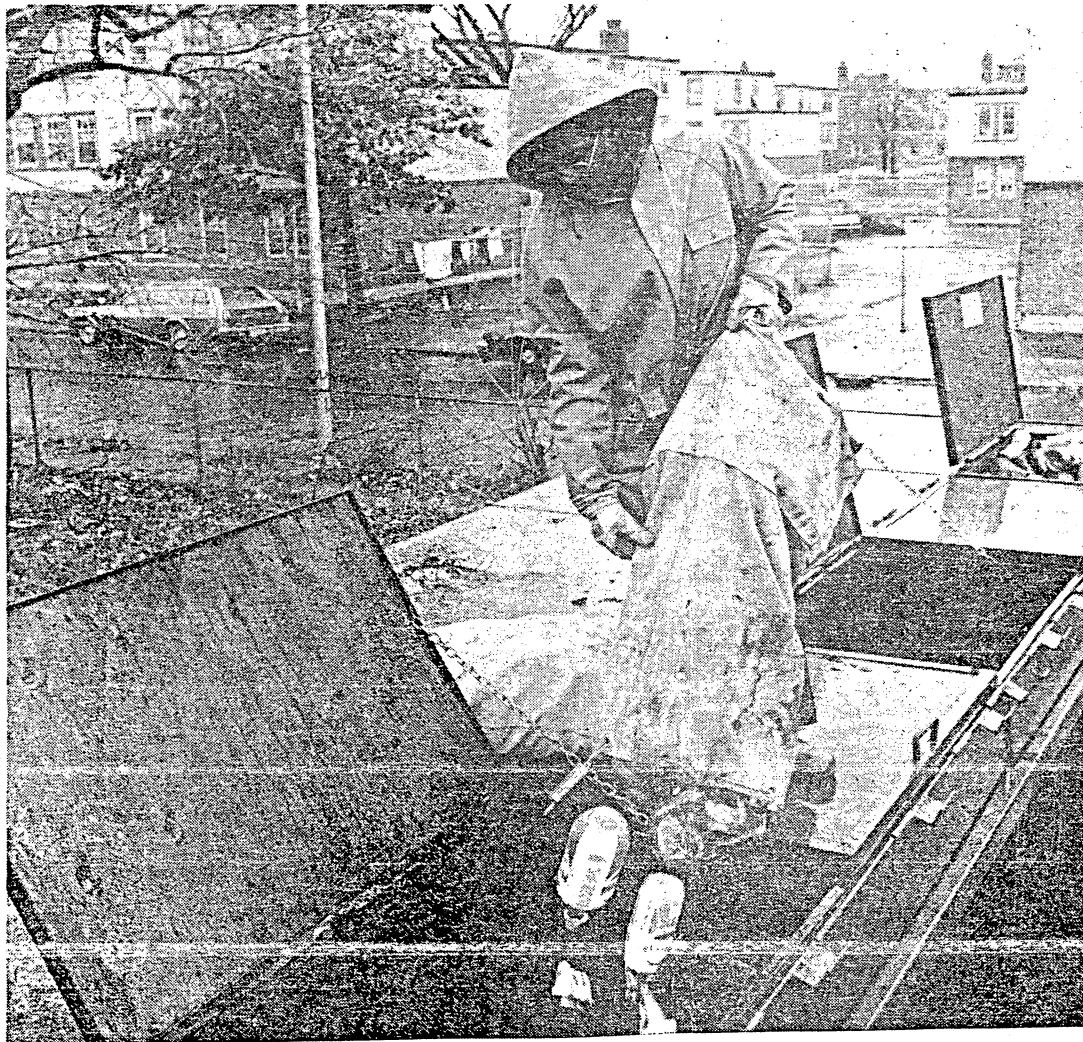
"We are watching to see if it works. If it does, we could use it at other housing authorities," said John Desmond, director for the Boston Air Pollution Control District. "I'd like to see them go through a couple of seasons. The Attorney General is observing them also...and will take appropriate action if they don't work," he added. Alternatives to the recycling program include upgrading the burning efficiency of the incinerators, adding some controls to them, or finding another method of disposal such as compacting.

Much does depend on the success of the program, as Spence knows. "By the middle or end of next year, we are going to have to start getting rid of the incinerators," he says.

Spence was due to meet with Public Works Dept. Commissioner Conrad Fagone to discuss the possibility of Residents Recycling cooperating with the Cambridge Recycling Program begun last June. But Spence is firm about one thing.

If the programs were combined in some way, he would want RR to remain "an independent, autonomous, tenant enterprise."

The tenants would be the first to agree.



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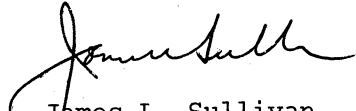
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
JAMES L. SULLIVAN
City Manager

December 20, 1976

To the Honorable, the City Council:

With reference to Awaiting Report No. 2, of this date, relative to Council Order No. 4 of November 15, 1976, pertaining to burning of trash in incinerator at Putnam Gardens and Woodrow Wilson Court, I transmit herewith a self-explanatory communication from Lewis H. Spence, Executive Director of the Cambridge Housing Authority.

Very truly yours,


James L. Sullivan
City Manager

JLS/b

Agenda #2 S-573

Re: to Awaiting Report No. 2 of December 20,
1976, pertaining to the burning of trash in
incinerator at Putnam Gardens and Woodrow Wil-
son Court.

In City Council,
December 20, 1976

12/20/76

Placed on File -