



Sustainability Commission Meeting

**Municipal Operations Service Center 399
E Lower Buckeye Road
Avondale, AZ 85323**

Wednesday, March 26, 2025, at 6:30 P.M.

Minutes

1. Call to Order at 6:33 P.M.

2. Roll Call by Staff Liaison

Members Present: Chair Daniel Schuh; Vice Chair Daniel Smith-Castillo; and Commissioners Paul Lemmon, Diana Estrada, Ramon Sanchez, and Alternate Ben Ruoti

Members Absent: Commissioners Al Nunez and Zahra Muhidin

Municipal Staff Present: Kimberly Anderson, Sustainability Officer / Staff Liaison

3. Unscheduled Public Appearances

No public present.

4. Approval of January 22, 2025, Minutes

COMMISSIONER LEMMON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JANUARY 22, 2025, AS PRESENTED. COMMISSIONER SANCHEZ SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED 5-0 WITH CHAIR SCHUH, VICE CHAIR SMITH-CASTILLO, AND COMMISSIONERS LEMMON, ESTRADA, AND SANCHEZ VOTING IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

5. R. City Presentation on Community Composting with JD

Ms. Anderson introduced JD from Recycled City aka R.City, a local pick-up service of food waste from residents and businesses used to make compost and grow produce that is later sold back to the residents in "farm boxes". Presently, the City of Avondale is finalizing a contract with R.City + Mill to provide residents with a discounted rate to encourage and promote food waste diversion and composting, which will begin in April 2025.

JD provided an overview of his background and how R. City Bucket Business was developed in 2013 and grown into the business today. Initially, five-gallon buckets were left at residents' homes to fill with food waste and exchanged weekly with clean ones. This composting program keeps food waste out of the landfill that creates methane gas. Approximately 40 percent of the food grown in the country is never eaten. During the growing and extracting process, topsoil is eroded, nitrogen is used and must be replaced with synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and genetics to regenerate the necessary topsoil to grow healthy vegetables.

JD further explained how revenue is used to cover overhead costs of a typical small farm. R. City covers the cost of the land, water, tractor, implements, and seed to make the compost. A new small farmer can utilize everything on the property at no cost and have a guaranteed buyer for their product. This model is taking risks out of small farming.

JD continued the detailed overview of the composting program. In 2024 R. City entered a partnership with Mill Industries. Noting, R. City is the only bucket service that offers the circular model of delivering the bucket, picking up the waste, leaving an empty bucket, creating compost, and delivering vegetables grown. Mill Industries solved the one problem JD had of acquiring customers because in a year the customer base grew by almost two thousand customers.

Mill Industries created the Mill Food Recycler also referred to as the Mill Bin. This will grind up and dehydrate the food waste preventing odors, bugs, mold, and so forth. The Mill Bin is operated through an app on a smartphone, which includes safety features. Once the bin is full, it is emptied into the five-gallon bucket that will be picked up monthly.

Through this partnership, a free one-month trial is offered, and bin is provided with a lifetime warranty. After the trial period, the cost is \$35.00 per month for the service. Every month the residents choose if they want the compost back for personal use at no additional cost or receive a quarterly complimentary delivery of vegetables.

The R.City + Mill Model saves municipalities on average \$100,000 a year in just tipping fees. JD noted once households have the Mill Bin, they become more conscientious about food waste, buying and cooking food differently. An overview of the data the app captures was provided.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to comment and ask questions. In response, JD discussed the Mill Bin app, sound, ability, safety features, and capacity. Reviewed who a small farmer is, what they do, and who they sell their produce to. He explained techniques used for individuals new to composting, such as pamphlets, labeling, and signs. Environmentally composting the average one pound of food waste per person daily makes a big impact. Energy consumption costs on average \$4.00 per

month. The Mill Bin weighs 50 pounds and has a lifetime warranty through this program; however, if it is purchased the warranty is for three years. For more information go to Mill.com or R.City or recycledcity.com.

Ms. Anderson discussed the contract where the City will subsidize \$10 of the first 25 residents who sign up in perpetuity and the status of the marketing and webpage, noting the end date is Earth Day. Commissioner Lemmon suggested showcasing this initiative at KidFest.

The Commission engaged in a discussion with Ms. Anderson regarding the contract with R. City + Mill and how it will be marketed. \$15,000 of the Environmental Funds will be used to promote and subsidize residents' costs for either the R. City or Mill Bin service. There is an initial goal of 50 residents signing up with the hopes of more to justify continuing the program and funding. Ms. Anderson provided an overview of the program in the City of Phoenix and the interesting information they derived from the data tracking. Commissioners suggested offering a reduction in another area in lieu of subsidizing this program.

Ms. Anderson explained residents would work directly with R. City and Mill to obtain their services. Data such as how pounds of food were diverted from the landfill, tipping fees saved, and return on investment will be tracked initially for residents only and provided to the city. Further responding to a commissioner's inquiry, Ms. Anderson opined that even though there is electricity usage and emissions from energy and transportation, it is less of an impact than the immediate high impact of methane gas on the atmosphere. JD also discussed how he takes on the risk of the operating costs.

6. Sustainability Updates

Ms. Anderson provided an overview of the Sustainability Updates.

- **Composting**
The Composting 101 classes are still being offered with the starter kits or residents can utilize the R. City and Mill service partnership. The intent is to provide options for residents and get everyone on board composting. An overview of planned marketing avenues was provided.
- **Community Engagement**
Ms. Anderson discussed the social media campaign being drafted to promote ways residents can do their part. Potentially have a different sustainability aspect every day and a call to action for the residents to encourage engagement.
- **Green Business Program Update**
Ms. Anderson noted the program is waiting for approval. The application was modified to a tiered structure to encourage competition among the businesses.

In response to the Commission's inquiries, Ms. Anderson explained there are many topics available for sustainable actions, including waste reduction and suggested use of R. City.

- **Resilient Roots Tree Planting Grant**
These grant funds are from the Department of Fire and Forest Management to plant trees along the rights-of-way and various locations, and Fred Campbell Park. On April 5, 2025, the Community Tree Plant event will occur at the Las Ligas Park. Code Compliance will be conducting a bulk trash drop off at the park as well. In response to the commission's inquiry, Ms. Anderson clarified the tree planting will be focused on the walkway area. The proposed work in the park is to update the parking lot and remove the baseball field.
- **Avondale Water Story**
Currently in the development, but has the steps laid out.
 1. Create the Water Story narrative in partnership with Cole Pihl, Water Resource Manager, and in collaboration with the water side.
 2. Bring back to the Sustainability Commission for a review and feedback discussion.
 3. Work with Mr. Pihl and Marketing for development of visual aids for the story.
 4. Obtain a location of installation, such as the Civic Center/City Hall area.
 5. and identify funding source(s), such as the water fund, environmental fund, or other grant funds.
- **Community Sustainability Grants**
An individual or group can apply for this grant for funds provided by the City to conduct a sustainability initiative project that fits within the criteria. The intent is to include the Commission in developing the application and participating in the approval processes.

7. Adjournment

The next Sustainability Commission Regular Meeting is scheduled for May 28, 2025.

The meeting adjourned at 7:41 P.M.

Ben Ruoti, Chair

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the meeting held on the 26th day of March 2025. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held, and that the quorum was present.

Kimberly Anderson

Kimberly Anderson
Sustainability Officer as Staff Liaison






March Meeting Minutes

Final Audit Report

2025-05-30

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