

**Watertown Free Public Library**

123 Main Street

Watertown, Massachusetts 02472

**Local History Collection**

**Watertown Recycling Advisory  
Board records, 1980-1994, 2002  
(inclusive)**

**TW118**

## Summary

**Collection name:** Watertown Recycling Advisory Board records, 1981-1994, 2002 (inclusive)

**Collection number:** TW118

**Repository:** Watertown Free Public Library (Watertown, Massachusetts)

**Creator:** Watertown Recycling Advisory Board

**Extent:** 1.2 cubic feet (1 Paige box and one letter size document box)

**Language:** English

**Provenance:** Records were sorted and compiled by Watertown Recycling Advisory Board members Janet Bunbury and Carol Baran and donated to Watertown Free Public Library (WFPL) circa 1993. A couple records were added in 2002, when WFPL hosted an exhibit (coordinated by Janet Bunbury) to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of recycling in Watertown.

**Processing information:** This collection was partially processed by library volunteer Autumn Haag in 2010. Additional description was provided by Digital Services Librarian Brita Zitin. The collection was previously catalogued as the Watertown Recycling Papers (HIST 363.7282).

**Conditions governing access:** Collection is open for use in the Local History Room, Watertown Free Public Library.

**Preferred citation:** Watertown Recycling Advisory Board records, TW118, Watertown Free Public Library Local History Collection, Watertown, Mass.

## Historical Note

The Watertown Recycling Advisory Board (RAB) was formed in 1981 to develop and manage a solid waste recycling program in Watertown. It functioned as an independent, volunteer-run nonprofit organization for over a decade before it was officially adopted by the town government and granted formal committee status in 1992.

In 1980, Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA) Watertown Health Department environmental coordinators Joan Singer and Martha Kirschenbaum began organizing and advocating for a town-wide recycling program. Singer and Kirschenbaum held the first meeting of the Watertown Recycling Advisory Board in March 1981; the gathering included members of the Watertown Citizens for Environmental Safety, the Conservation Commission, and the League of Women Voters; business owners; students; and other

Watertown community members. Singer and Kirschenbaum continued their public awareness campaign into the summer and, in consultation with Janet Mycoff, Recycling Coordinator for the Corporation for a Cleaner Commonwealth (CCC), prepared a comprehensive proposal for a Watertown Recycling Program.

Prompted by the growing expense of solid waste disposal and increased public interest in the environment, the Town of Watertown voted to approve Singer and Kirschenbaum's proposal for a recycling program on June 8, 1981. The Town established the Watertown Recycling Committee to join with the Watertown Recycling Advisory Board (RAB) as the governing body tasked with planning and managing the recycling program. In the weeks that followed, the state authorized the Town to create a revolving fund for the program, so that a portion of recycling revenues could be used to support the program in lieu of municipal funding. Volunteers repurposed the site of the old town incinerator (which operated at 166 Grove Street from 1962 to 1977) for use as a drop-off recycling depot. On July 18, 1981, the Watertown Recycling Center officially opened to the public. Encouraged by the RAB's slogan "cash not trash," residents of Watertown and neighboring municipalities brought newspapers, cans, and glass to the Center for recycling.

Throughout the 1980s, the RAB oversaw Watertown Recycling Center operations and promoted recycling activities in Watertown. It recruited and coordinated volunteers, managed logistics, promoted recycling education and awareness, applied for grants, researched buyers and markets, and raised funds. The RAB also monitored neighboring towns' recycling activities and explored opportunities for regional collaboration. In 1990, the RAB joined the MetroWest Regional Recycling Committee (MWRRC), an advisory group committed to sharing resources and information, establishing a regional program and Materials Reprocessing Facility (MRF), attracting markets for recyclables, and encouraging the use recycled materials. The RAB also advocated for local implementation of state mandates and increased services, including composting, disposal of white goods, and curbside pickup.

On October 1, 1989, the Town of Watertown Department of Public Works assumed management of the Recycling Center. The RAB continued to advise on recycling activities and provide volunteers to staff the Center while advocating for further support and formal adoption by the town. In 1991, the Town provided some of that support by hiring RAB member Lissa Gifford as Recycling Center volunteer coordinator, a role that had previously been unpaid and increasingly time-consuming. On September 8, 1992, the RAB was officially adopted by the town government and given formal committee status. From this point on, the board would be composed of twelve citizens at large appointed by the Town Manager.

## Acronyms

BFI: Browning Ferris Industries

CCC: Corporation for a Cleaner Commonwealth  
CETA: Comprehensive Employment Training Act  
CRINC: New England Container Recovery, Inc.  
EMRA: Eastern Massachusetts Recycling Association  
MRF: Materials Reprocessing Facility  
MRI: Massachusetts Refusetech  
MWRRC: MetroWest Regional Recycling Committee  
NESWC: Northeast Solid Waste Committee  
RAB: Recycling Advisory Board  
WRC: Watertown Recycling Center

## Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of roughly 1.1 cubic feet of loose records. It documents activities of the Watertown Recycling Advisory Board (RAB), which developed and managed a recycling program in Watertown, Massachusetts.

The collection contains mixed organizational and administrative records including meeting minutes, member lists, promotional flyers, informational pamphlets, memos, correspondence, research files, planning documents, reports, and grant proposals. Records such as purchase orders and receipts, revenue summaries, and lists of donations in kind document RAB financial activities. Other records relate to Recycling Center property and equipment, volunteer recruitment efforts and staff scheduling, or RAB projects or initiatives involving composting, white goods, corrugated materials, curbside pickup, or other efforts.

Clippings from local newspapers are present throughout the collection; some of these are about RAB activities and others are about RAB volunteers. There are also photographs, biographical sketches, and timelines of RAB activities (folder 54-56).

This collection also contains documents produced by or relating to the recycling activities of other local groups in the Greater Boston Area or regional organizations, including the MetroWest Regional Recycling Committee (MWRRC) and the Eastern Massachusetts Recycling Association (EMRA). Additional records document RAB public programs and special projects, including a 1983 performance entitled *Rosenshontz: A Celebration of the Environment*, a recycling competition, and a 1991 bumper sticker design contest at the middle school.

Files retain the order established by the donors. A couple papers from 2001 and 2002 document the twentieth anniversary celebration of recycling in Watertown; these appear to have been added to the collection at a later date (folder 54-56).

## Arrangement

Files retain original titles. Dates have been added or revised to accurately reflect the inclusive date range for file contents.

### File List

1. Purchase Orders: Town of Watertown, 1982-1983
2. (Samples) of Town Warrants and Bills Payable by Recycling Committee, 1981-1982
3. Deposit Container Receipts, 1990-1991
4. Financial Records, Billing and Permits, 1981-1985
5. Recycling Press Clippings, 1981-1993
6. Volunteers and Volunteer Groups, 1984-1988
7. Recycling Press Clippings, 1981-1990
8. Celebration Fifth Anniversary, 1986
9. Promotion [and] Fundraising: Special Events, Rosenshontz Concert, 1983-1984
10. Promotion [and] Education [and] Fundraising (including Special Projects), 1981-1991
11. Donations in Kind, 1980-1982
12. Vendor Transactions: North Shore Recycled Fibers, 1985-1992
13. Vendor Transactions: Brockton Iron/Steel and E.L. Harvey, 1988-1992
14. Vendor Quotes, 1991
15. Survey Businesses, re: recycling corrugated cardboard, 1983
16. Other Towns' and States' Programs (including CRINC), 1983-1989
17. Surveys: 1. State Bureau Solid Waste Disposal, General Operations; 2. Cars, Wtn. Site, 1982-1990
18. Survey of Community Organizations' Awareness of Watertown Recycling Center and Support of its Development, 1982
19. Composting, 1984-1993
20. Building and Site Issues: Platform[,] Signs, Bins, Goodwill Trailer, 1982-1988
21. Bans on Certain Materials Being Incinerated or Buried, 1989-1992
22. Administrative Management: Personnel and Miscellaneous Problems, 1984-1992
23. Region: Recycling: Metro West, 1990-1992
24. Regional Planning: State, and Other Proposals for 'MRF' (Materials Reprocessing Facility), 1982-1989
25. Background planning with town officials prior to town taking on administration of recycling center, 1988-1991
26. 1984—(Attempts) Insurance, 1984-1986

27. Background Planning with Town 1981-1988
28. Financial Statements, 1981-1990
29. Financial Statements, 1990-1992
30. Eastern Massachusetts Recycling Association 'EMRA', 1988-1992
31. Recycling Minutes, 1981
32. Northeast Solid Waste Committee (NESWC) & Mass. Refusetech (MRI) Service Agreement, April 8, 1981
33. Recycling Minutes, 1982
34. Recycling Minutes, 1983
35. Recycling Minutes, 1984
36. Recycling Minutes, 1985
37. Minutes, 1986
38. Recycling Minutes, 1991
39. Recycling Minutes and Agenda, 1990
40. Recycling Minutes, 1989
41. Recycling Minutes, 1988
42. Recycling Minutes, 1987
43. Proposal in Support of Grant Applications, Spring 1981
44. Proposal for a Recycling Center in Watertown, May 1981
45. Corporation for a Cleaner Commonwealth, 1981; Proposal for Funding Assistance, 1981
46. Corporation for a Cleaner Commonwealth Grant to Recycling Center, July 1981
47. Articles of Organization Incorporating Watertown Recycling Center, November 14, 1983
48. Negotiations for leasing Grove Street site, 1981-1983
49. Recycling Advisory Board Members, 1981-1992
50. Report of Watertown Recycling Program, May 1982
51. Recycling Advisory Board Official Status, December 1992
52. Summaries of Main Issues and Events, 1987-1992
53. Recycling Minutes, 1992
- 54-56. Watertown Recycling Advisory Board clippings correspondence, 1980-1991, 2002
- 57-59. Watertown Recycling Advisory Board records, March 1989 - April 1991
- 60-61. Watertown Recycling Advisory Board, 1992
62. Recycling, 1993

## Related Materials

Bunbury, Janet D. *Recycling in Watertown, Massachusetts Prehistory and Survey of the First Twelve Years*. 1993.

## Access Points

### People:

Berman, Seth

Bunbury, Janet

Dickerson, Richard

Gifford, Lissa

Kirschenbaum, Martha

Krevy, Robert H.

Oates, William

Parker, Seth

Porter, Douglas, 1926-1991

Prendergast, Martin

Shortell, Verne

Singer, Joan

### Corporate names:

Watertown Recycling Center (Watertown, Mass.)

### Subjects:

Community organization—Massachusetts—Watertown

Environmentalism—Massachusetts—Watertown

Public works—Massachusetts—Watertown

Recycling (Waste, etc.)—Massachusetts—Watertown

Refuse and refuse disposal—Massachusetts—Watertown

Refuse disposal facilities—Massachusetts—Watertown

Voluntarism—Massachusetts—Watertown

Watertown (Mass.)—Politics and government