



City of Cambridge

Executive Department

YI-AN HUANG
City Manager

CMA 2024 #233
IN CITY COUNCIL
November 4, 2024

To the Honorable, the City Council:

In response to Awaiting Report No 24-56 requesting that the City consider scheduling a Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection Day and a Paper Shredding Event on a Sunday, instead of having them all on Saturday, we report the following:

Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection Days

The City of Cambridge holds four Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection Days each year to support the proper disposal of hazardous materials. Items collected include batteries (vehicle & non-alkaline), car fluids, car tires, chemicals (cleaners, glue removers, photography and swimming pool), fluorescent light bulbs, mercury items, paints, poisons, prescription medicines (also accepted year-round at the Police Department), propane cylinders, waste fuels, and fire extinguishers. Anyone with a question about how to dispose of a specific item can check the City's "[Get Rid of It Right](#)" tool. After typing the name of a waste item, the tool will let you know how to recycle or dispose of the item.

The HHW Collection Days are scheduled for once a month in April, June, August and November. The events are held on Saturdays between 9 am and 1 pm and the location alternates between the east side of the city and the west side. The program costs between \$70,000 and \$90,000 per year. That covers the contractors staffing the event, as well as the proper handling and disposal of all collected materials. In 2023, the program served approximately 1,200 households between the 4 events.

If residents reach out in advance of an HHW Collection Day and let DPW know that they cannot attend the scheduled event due to a conflict with a religious observation, staff work with them to drop off the material in advance. This has worked reasonably well but is not an accommodation that we can advertise more broadly, as we cannot handle this service for more than a handful of people.

Staff reached out to our contractor to determine the feasibility of holding a Sunday HHW Collection Day. Unfortunately, they cannot staff an event on Sunday. They do not have the available personnel and have indicated that they would likely not participate in a contract that includes a Sunday event. They have more flexibility to staff a weekday event (perhaps 3 pm to 7 pm) that would provide an alternative to Saturdays for residents.



The current contract for HHW Collection Days expires after the November 2024 event. For the 2025 contract, staff will shift one of the 4 weekend events to a weekday event. The final dates and schedule will need to be finalized with the contractor, and we will need to evaluate how the weekday HHW Collection Day goes when it overlaps with weekday traffic congestion, but we believe providing the service during the week would be a beneficial addition to the program.

Shred Day

Within the License Commission is the Consumers' Council Division ("Consumers' Council"), which is the Local Consumer Protection Agency for the areas of Cambridge, Somerville, Waltham, Arlington, Belmont and Watertown.

The Consumers' Council works in conjunction with the Massachusetts Attorney's General Office ("AGO") to provide information, resources and assistance to consumers who have encountered unfair or deceptive business practices. The Consumers' Council is partly funded by a grant from the AGO, which is why it provides services to residents of other cities and towns. The grant from the AGO has conditions and requires the Consumers' Council to host various events wherein consumer protection services and education are provided to residents of the areas serviced. Accordingly, in 2010, the Consumers' Council created Shred Day to be able to provide services to combat identity theft and further educate on consumer protection issues. Shred Day, which started as a once-a-year program, is now hosted two times per year due to its popularity. For instance, the most recent Shred Day event, which was hosted in September 2024, regardless of the rain approximately 350 persons attended and 4.8 tons of materials were shredded.

Presently, the company used to provide the shredding services is A1 Datashred. Staffing Shred Day on a Saturday is already a challenge due to employee and union agreements. For example, A1 Datashred employees typically work Monday – Friday either 6:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. or 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Similarly, the Consumers' Council staff have a typical 37.5-hour Monday – Friday City work schedule. Consumers' Council Staff will work with A1 Datashred to find a different days and times that could provide the community with an option other than a Saturday to participate in Shred Day. Consumers' Council will commit to planning an alternate option as they plan for 2025 programming.

Very truly yours,



Yi-An Huang
City Manager