

**EXTRA INFORMATION**

4/23

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**Christine Joyce**

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**From:** Mike Gowing [mikeg.acton@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Sunday, April 22, 2012 5:33 PM  
**To:** Board of Selectmen  
**Subject:** Fwd: BoS meeting item  
**Attachments:** Acton's Bins.doc; Bostonglobe032712.doc

Additional info for Mondays' meeting. Please see the spreadsheet that Carol provided...interesting.

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Carol Doblewski <cdoblewski@gmail.com>  
**Date:** Sat, Apr 21, 2012 at 11:25 AM  
**Subject:** BoS meeting item  
**To:** [mikeg.acton@gmail.com](mailto:mikeg.acton@gmail.com)

Mike,

As President of the Friends of the Acton Libraries, I have a keen interest in the BOS agenda item for Monday related to collection bins. I thought I'd give you a heads up on why!

Collection bins are sprouting up all over Acton. Some of these bins are operated by 501(c)(3) organizations such as the Red Cross. Others are operated by for-profit businesses such as Got Books and Recycling Associates. There are at least 32 of these bins in Acton now.

There are two problems with these bins as I and many others see them. First, they are an unsightly blot on our landscape. No zoning law authorizes them. It appears to me that we in Acton regulate small signs with some care, but allow (by default, not zoning law) these monstrous bins or dumpsters, it seems, wherever.

More important to me is the fact that the for-profit bins are seriously undercutting many not-for-profit groups. Mine is just one of them. Let me provide you with an example. Two for-profit book businesses with many book bins in Acton are Got Books and Big-Hearted Books. Both do a bit of charitable good (how much is not made public; neither are they required to report their earnings) and use words such as Donate and "big-hearted." But Got Books is a huge business with a 6-figure profit. What they take out of Acton is directly impacting the friends for the Acton Libraries and the West Acton Citizens' Library. The former group funds the town libraries to the tune of some \$35K per year. But this funding is in jeopardy as book profits are siphoned off into the hands of for-profit, non-Acton business. Just as disturbingly, these companies masquerade as do-gooders. Many a person who contributes believes she or he is giving to a charity when his or her donation is actually lining private profits.

The city of Quincy is in the process of taking action against these raiders; I am attaching a Globe article to provide the context for their new ordinance. It is also at this link:

[http://articles.boston.com/2012-03-27/yourtown/31245714\\_1\\_bins-profit-ordinance](http://articles.boston.com/2012-03-27/yourtown/31245714_1_bins-profit-ordinance)

I am also attaching an inventory of our bins here in Acton.

You might also be interested in this bit of Globe investigative journalism on the topic of Got Books:  
[http://www.boston.com/lifestyle/articles/2008/05/17/charity\\_begins\\_at\\_home\\_for\\_this\\_bookseller/](http://www.boston.com/lifestyle/articles/2008/05/17/charity_begins_at_home_for_this_bookseller/)

I hope you will have a moment to look at this information before the meeting,

**Acton's Bins as of 4/20/2012**  
(a good faith inventory)

<b>Location</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Charitable or For Profit</b>
Prospect Street at Route 27	Reading Tree Planet Aid Red Cross "Public Clothing Drop" <sup>1</sup>	charitable charitable charitable <b>for profit</b> <sup>2</sup>
Ace Hardware on 27	Recycling Associates	<b>for profit</b>
Near the Drome on 27	Reading Tree Big-Hearted Books "Public Clothing Drop"	charitable <b>for profit</b> <b>for profit</b>
111 at 27 (by Kmart/Baker Whitney)	Recycling Associates Got Books	<b>for profit</b> <b>for profit</b>
111 near 27 by Acton Children's School	Planet Aid	charitable
27 HGRM	Got Books	<b>for profit</b> <sup>3</sup>
2A near 27 and Nagog Woods Plaza	Planet Aid	charitable
2A by tack shop	2 Planet Aid Big-Hearted Books	charitable <b>for profit</b>
2A and 27, other	Planet Aid Big-Hearted Books	charitable <b>for profit</b>
2A, Gould's/Donelan's	Red Cross "Public Clothing Drop" Got Books	charitable <b>for profit</b> <b>for profit</b>
2A Mobil Station near Pillar House	Recycling Associates	<b>for profit</b>
2A Sovereign Bank	Planet Aid	charitable
2A behind New London Pizza	Recycling Associates	<b>for profit</b>

<sup>1</sup> New England Clothes Recycling

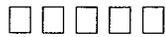
<sup>2</sup> "For profit" vs. "charitable" status was determined by the state attorney general's listing of charitable organizations in MA; those categorized as for profit do not appear on this list: <http://www.charities.ago.state.ma.us/charities/index.asp>

<sup>3</sup> This *single* bin takes in an average of 3,750 pounds of books PER MONTH according to Sharon Martens, HGRM Executive Director. *That is 45,000 pounds of books per year or more than 22 tons.* The Friends of the Acton Libraries estimate that, even if half these books are not saleable, the lost revenue per year to the town and school libraries is not less than \$24,000.

by Theater III (Willow and Central)	Planet Aid	charitable
Landfill	3 Salvation Army bins	charitable
St. Elizabeth's Church	Got Books	<b>for profit</b>
Tables to Teapots	Recycling Associates	<b>for profit</b>
Nagog Park (2A)	2 St. Vincent de Paul	charitable
<b>Totals:</b>	32 bins	17 charitable 15 for profit

# Quincy City Council looks to regulate donation bins

March 27, 2012|By Jessica Bartlett, Town Correspondent, Globe Staff



By Jessica Bartlett, Town Correspondent

Quincy City Councilors will look to implement a new ordinance regulating the use of donation bins throughout the city after the council received a positive recommendation from the Ordinance Committee Monday night.

Currently, there are no regulations for the placement of donation bins, and so councilors have little understanding of how many bins are on city streets and who is benefitting from them.

The new ordinance would mandate that companies providing the bins get a license from the licensing board. A fee of \$150 would apply.

Although the city would be collecting revenue, the businesses allowing the bins to be on their property could not turn a profit from the enterprise.

Furthermore, to be approved, bin companies must be a registered non-profit in good standing with the Secretary of State.

Introduced by councilor Kevin Coughlin, numerous other councilors agreed that the ordinance was needed.

“I think it’s good to charge for these things. They are taking up space, they are unseemly in some spots...but I think it’s

important for folks to give to charities that they deem worthy,” councilor Kristen Hughes said.

Councilor Margaret Laforest also lamented the popping up of the pink donation bins in her ward. Not only have the bins been taking away from the city’s other charities, such as the Goodwill Store, but oftentimes the donated books and clothing are sold for profit online.

“The ideal is we want to see non-profits in the city, because that’s the impression. ... There are some that will work with the city for the city’s benefits...but there [should be] a way we can contemplate regulating who comes in,” Laforest said.

City Clerk Joe Shea agreed that donations to non-profit companies had gone down with the increasingly numerous donation bin pop ups.

“I assume they are being [shortchanged] when you see a proliferation of these. It’s a convenience thing; you [donate where you are] closer to your house. And everyone has it in their mind that these are non-profits,” Shea said.

To help coordinate the ordinance, Shea said that the fee would be waived for some organizations and that food inspectors could add donation bin checking to their list of duties to regulate them.

The proposed ordinance also outlines the specifics of placement for the bins, discussing what kind of zoning would be needed, where they can be located on site, and that there could only be a maximum of three at one location.

Obtaining a permit would require detailed drawings of site for position, including existing structures, lot lines, pictures of

proposed site, and a notarized letter of consent from property owner.

“If passed, everyone would have to register, and if it was a for profit venture, within x number of days it would have to be removed,” Councilor Doug Gutro said.

The matter will be taken to the full Quincy City Council for a final vote.