Senate approves battery drive

Student government makes changes to the language for a biannual battery drive

BY ELENA BELLAMY
Staff Reporter

Truman State Student Senate took a step toward creating a biannual battery recycling drive last week.

The Senate approved changes to the language in the Student Government Standing Rules which mandate that the Environmental Affairs Committee host a battery recycling drive each semester. To make hazardous waste recycling a routine occurrence at Truman, the Environmental Affairs Committee developed a system in which different committee members take donated batteries to facilities in either St. Louis or Kansas City, Missouri, Environmental Chair junior Chris Hornsey said.

Hornsey said the changes the Senate made during last week's meeting will allow the drives to operate independent of the Kirksville Public Works Department. He said the Senate made the changes to reduce costs and avoid city stipulations that would prevent Student Government from being able to make drives a recurring event.

The goal of the drives is two-fold — to protect the resources of Kirksville by reducing hazardous waste disposal and to encourage a sense of environmental responsibility for Truman students, Hornsey said.

"Most people I would talk to, both in and outside of Student Government, weren't even aware there's a special procedure for battery disposal and that was a little frightening," Hornsey said. "There's a lot of things people can do that they don't know about, and I'm hoping to make people more aware of programs like glass and battery recycling so that when they leave Truman, they retain that awareness as they continue on with their lives."

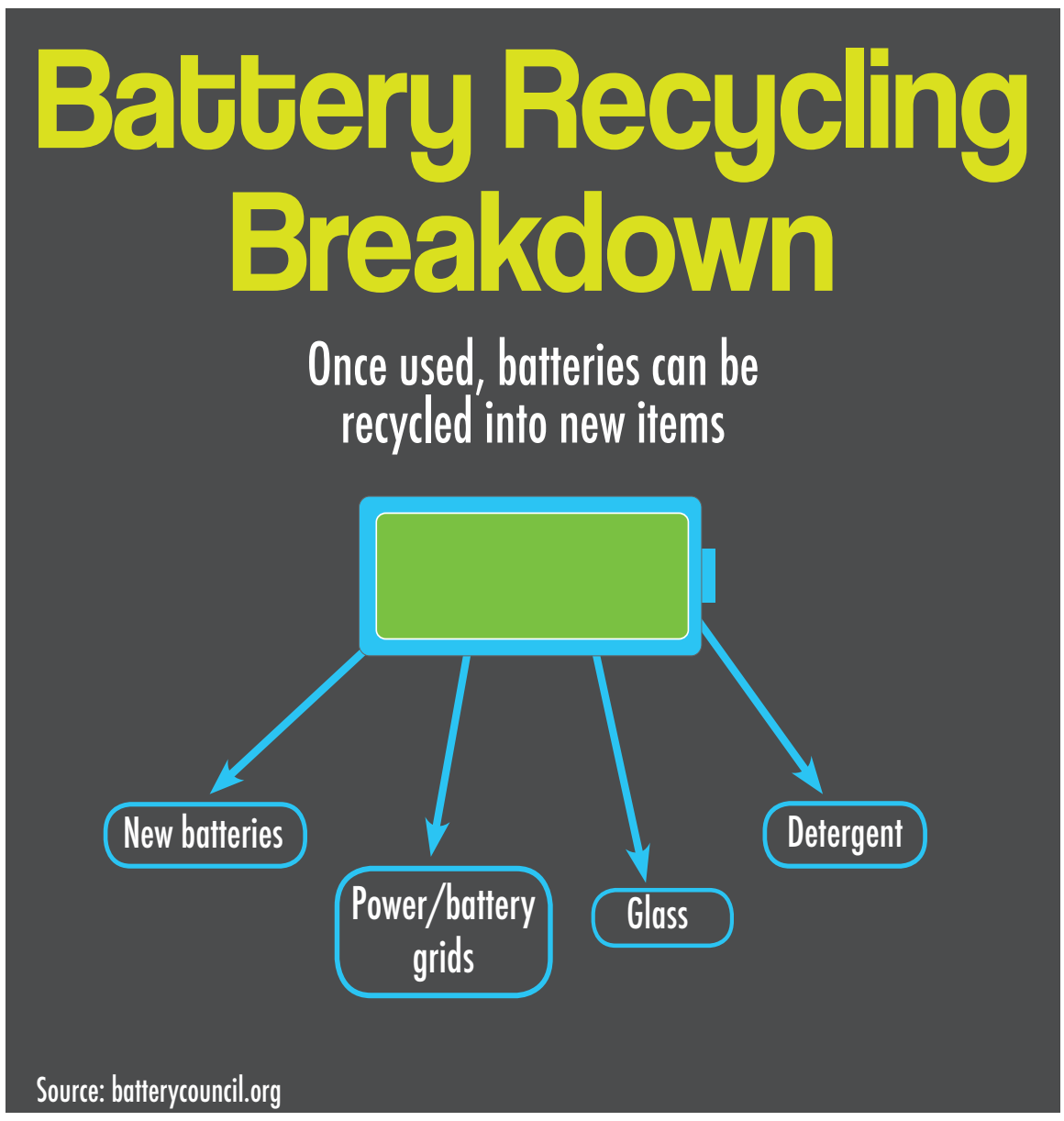
Hornsey said not recycling batteries can have a negative impact on the environment. He said as batteries break down in landfills, they release acid and heavy metals such as mercury. Hornsey said the toxins can leak into the soil, which is not healthy.

The next spring drive will most likely take place April 2016, during Earth Week, Hornsey said. Hornsey said the recycling procedure itself should operate in a fairly straightforward way.

"There are a few details that need to be worked out first," Hornsey said. "Most you can just put into a bin, but if you get too many of certain kinds they can create a circuit and potentially start a fire. We're going to avoid that."

By making battery recycling an event and advertising it during Earth Week, Hornsey said he hopes the idea of recycling will become more important in students' minds than it would if receptacles were consistently available.

"Most of us, at Truman especially, are here to make the world a better place," Hornsey said. "Whether it's learning to be a nurse or doctor, or studying English to be a teacher, or anything else, I want to give our campus the opportunity to know they're making a difference right now while they're at Truman."



Bill Hennke, Public Works fleet supervisor and manager of the Household Hazardous Waste program, said the city's Public Works Department currently offers a household hazardous waste program that, like the one Student Senate has proposed at Truman, offers two scheduled drives each year. Kirksville residents can make appointments to drop off paint, cleaning supplies, batteries and other toxic products, Hennke said.

Hennke said the toxins from hazardous waste that leech into the groundwater can have an affect on the city's water supply.

"It ends up in Kirksville's systems, and too much toxic material throws off the balance created by the microorganisms and chemicals used to treat the city's water," Hennke said.

Truman alumna Amanda Frazer said she worked in conjunction with Public Works to host a battery drive during March 2014 as part of her senior environmental science capstone project. The drive collected almost 160 pounds of batteries and had a large emphasis on recycling awareness and education, Frazer said.

"It's just as important to properly dispose of other household hazardous items, but I found a niche with batteries," Frazer said. "College students tend to have a lot of excess batteries around, and by recycling them I hoped they could learn about recycling other hazardous items."

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— Environmental Chair junior Chris Hornsey

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