**Solid Waste Committee**

**Minutes April 21, 2021**

**Present:** Cathy Curtis, Lisa Wesel, Patrick McDonough, Michael Smith, Susan Drucker, Susan Brown, Bryan Benson, Betsy Steen, David Berry, Paul Denis

**Call to Order:** Cathy Curtis calls the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

**Amendments to the Agenda**: Susan Brown asks to add a “recap of our activities and workshop with the Select Board to figure out where we are so we can have clear communication with the public about what we’re doing and where we’re at.”

Lisa Wesel asks if we want to add her report on Terracycle to the agenda; Cathy Curtis answers yes.

**Approval of the Minutes from April 7, 2021**: Susan Brown moves to approve the minutes; Lisa Wesel seconds; all in favor.

**Old Business**

**Review any Information from the April 20th Select Board Meeting as it Pertains to the Committee**: Cathy Curtis reports that there was a discussion about the status of the Barn’s safety between Helen Watts (David Berry’s engineer) and the Board. Helen Watts stated that the Recycling Barn does not meet the requirements of a legally “Dangerous Building”. Nicole Briand has asked that Helen Watts send an additional letter specifically stating that it is safe. Betsy Steen adds that she thinks the Board also asked that Helen Watts revisit the Barn to ensure that there is nothing stored on the second or third floor that would exceed the floor load limits.

Cathy Curtis reports that the Board voted to add the Citizen’s Petition to Buy the Recycling Barn to the town warrant.

Susan Drucker adds that at the end of meeting there was further discussion about the petition and what it would do to the budget: there were concerns that if residents voted to buy the barn, that there were no funds to cover the purchase, and that there would have to be a Special Town meeting to allocate those funds. The Board also had questions and discussions about when the Solid Waste Committee’s work would be done and hoped that it could be done soon.

Bryan Benson reports that he received a request from the Board asking the Committee to be at their next meeting (Tuesday, April 27th) to provide a verbal update on our work. Susan Brown added that she had spoken with Jeremy Cluchey about the need to meet as well.

**Discuss Citizens’ Petition to Allow Residents to Vote to Buy the Recycling Barn at Town Meeting**: Cathy Curtis notes that Micheal Smith had asked to discuss the petition and how it relates to the Committee. Michael Smith explains that he’s confused — that the Committee “has been meeting for nine months, we’re trying to design a recycling program for the town, and that we’ve been told that there’s no site determined…and then people on this Committee sign a petition to purchase a facility that we don’t even know if we want to use.” He has a problem that members of this Committee are pushing to purchase a site. Susan Brown notes that she signed the petition as a citizen, not as a Committee member, but that she will stand behind whatever the majority of the Committee decides in the future. She asks Michael Smith if the comments he has made on social media about the Barn costs are as a citizen or as a Committee member; Michael Smith answers that he was expressing “facts that came from this Committee”, that he was quoting Mark Favreau. Susan Brown notes that the pending Feasibility Study has been issued to determine those costs, and that Mark Favreau’s estimate was an educated guess but not a fact. Michael Smith says that based on Mark Favreau’s experience, his estimate would be an accurate figure. He notes that the Barn is not a simple purchase of $175,000, but $675,000 when Mark Favreau’s estimated $500,000 build-out costs are added in; he points out that the life expectancy of the Barn is also questionable. Betsy Steen reasserts that Mark Favreau’s figures are only an estimated guess and she notes that if the Public Works building cost 2.6 million dollars, it seems unlikely that we can build a new recycling facility that would cost less than $675,000. Michael Smith notes that unlike the Public Works building, a recycling facility wouldn’t need radiant flooring, or “one of those plows or trucks in the barn; you don’t have lifts; it’s totally different; you can build a metal building — it costs $10 a square foot for the materials; it costs $10 a square foot for the labor to erect it; it costs $10,000 per square foot for a 12 inch concrete slab; when you take those numbers and stretch them out, you can put a building, 5,000 square feet, build it up, and you can get in for under $300,000.”

Lisa Wesel states that we’re not at the point to discuss this since we don’t have a determination on square footage space needs yet. She agrees with Susan Brown that as Committee members we need to back Committee decisions, but as individual private citizens she assumes we are allowed to vote and sign petitions. She also notes that she still feels “in the dark” about FOAA rules concerning Committee membership and how it relates to citizenship in a town.

Patrick McDonough sees the petition and our task as a Committee as two separate things. He believes the petition is “putting the cart before the horse: wanting to buy the barn is the same as signing a contract right now to build a brand new building of a certain size when we don’t know…where this whole program is going.”

Cathy Curtis states that she understands why this would be confusing to town members; she believes that there are going to be two options and that voters should know what it costs for both options. She is not going to weigh in on either outcome as that is not our Committee’s job.

Susan Drucker agrees that we’ve been told it’s not our job to determine a site. She still wants to add that in regard to the current discussion about comparative estimated costs, that the $300,000 Michael Smith contends would pay to build a new facility doesn’t include the significant costs required to clear and level the land, build an access road, and lay impervious surfacing. She also points out that the petition is not to buy the barn, but to give citizens an opportunity to vote yes or no before money is spent on studying two competing options.

Betsy Steen adds that part of the impetus for the petition was about time, not just money. She notes that the timeframe for the current plan, with the required studies and subsequent cost allocation votes, will take at least a year, if not two or more. In response to Lisa Wesel’s question about what a yes vote to buy the Barn would do to the Committee’s work, Betsy Steen offers that the Committee would still need to design the program and that the Barn would be able to accommodate whatever that program might be. Betsy Steen adds that window portals installed in the Barn for the Pilot Program have already solved the safety issue of the public being near the (removed) baler. She wonders why the town needs to spend $26,000 to study these questions when some of these issues are already solved, and notes that there are many talented people in town who could provide answers to any remaining issues just as effectively as Calderwood Engineering and for considerably less money.

Patrick McDonough asks if the Committee could go behind the scenes and see what is being done at the Barn and how much square footage is being utilized; Betsy Steen answers that that would be an excellent idea and wishes that the Select Board would do the same. Cathy Curtis reminds the group that the Pilot Program is not a town program and that Bryan Benson would add his own input to any new system should the town move back to the Barn. She notes that we are “in a lot of weeds” right now. She concludes that she doesn’t think the Select Board is at all close to saying that the Barn is safe for the public to be in without all the engineering pieces in place.

Betsy Steen comments that she believes Helen Watts (engineer) is going to re-visit the Barn and verify its safety. She adds that some of the Select Board members were “exceedingly rude” to Helen Watts as a guest of the Board (Lisa Wesel, Susan Drucker, and Susan Brown agree), and that she (Betsy Steen) has written a note of apology to her.

Susan Drucker asks if Bryan Benson wants to weigh in on anything. Bryan Benson answers that while he hasn’t been in the barn to see what David Berry is doing, he feels that the Pilot Program is not doing what the Survey “wants us to do”: his interpretation of the Survey is that the residents want a lot more, and therefore we will need more room than what David Berry is dealing with right now. Betsy Steen points out that there is space available in the Barn for additional services, and that historically, there was plenty of room for everything.

**Bryan Benson’s Report to the Committee**: Bryan Benson notes that Bulky Waste and Roadside Clean-Up had been postponed from April 17th until this upcoming Saturday (April 24) due to bad weather. Brian Hobart will be collecting food waste and brush at his farm on Ridge Road the same day. Cathy Curtis asks Bryan Benson to remind residents about the new collection date on Facebook. In response to a question from Betsy Steen, Bryan Benson notes that all furniture will be loaded on the truck and disposed of, that there is no room to store items.

Susan Drucker asks for an update on the status of the Vernal Pool question on the Public Works land. Bryan Benson says that he has not heard any news. Susan Brown asks who is in charge of determining “Significance”; Bryan Benson answers that PineTree Engineering subcontracted to have that done; Nicole Briand would know more. Bryan Benson reiterates that even if the pools are found to be Significant Pools, there would still be enough land for a building.

Susan Drucker asks about the new trailer that she heard was being bought to share between the Solid Waste Program and Public Works. Bryan Benson answers that it is being considered but has not been purchased yet; he doesn’t believe it will happen this budget year. Susan Drucker asks which vehicle Bryan Benson is using to haul cardboard; Bryan Benson answers that he uses the Public Works’ F550; Susan Drucker asks if he had been able to share that truck in the past, whether it’s a helpful cost savings as far as gas mileage, and whether it can haul more than the old truck: Bryan Benson answers that this is the first time he’s been able to use the 550, and that yes, it’s an improvement both as far as gas mileage and amounts hauled. Lisa Wesel asks if having access to the Public Works truck changes his calculations on hauling costs in regard to Ecomaine; she remembers that Bryan Benson had been concerned that the hauling costs would be too expensive with the old truck; Bryan Benson confirms that the F550 would make hauling costs less.

**Review Email Exchange between Michael Smith and Bryan Benson Regarding Hazardous Waste**: (See Addendum 1:“Hazardous Waste Email”) No additional discussion.

**Discuss Option for Residents to Bring Trash to Public Works on Thursdays**: David Berry explains that the option for in-person trash drop-off was discontinued years ago because residents would often leave trash bags with no tags, and on non-drop-off days as well.

**Review Chapters for Town Report**:

Town by Town Comparison Chapter: Lisa Wesel’s report has been completed, other than a correction about curbside recycling pick-up being “free”.

Survey Results Chapter: Betsy Steen reviews the draft document she prepared. Comments from Lisa Wesel and Cathy Curtis to revise some of the narrative to keep it as objective as possible; Betsy Steen said she will revise accordingly. Discussion to include both a written summary and the corresponding graphs. Discussion about qualifying graph numbers (i.e., a “3” in a scale of 0 - 5 could be read as neutral or favorable — best to not assume what a respondent intended); decision to simply present the numbers in written form along with a chronological ranking of most-wanted to least-wanted services.

Patrick McDonough observes that the Survey represents the feelings of those who responded, but there are 2500 other residents who didn’t respond who may not care about recycling, and those opinions also need to be kept in mind. Susan Brown asks how we can guess their opinions, or will we just find out when people vote at town meeting; Patrick McDonough clarifies that just keeping in mind that the survey doesn’t represent the entire town is worthwhile to remember as we move through the process.

Betsy Steen comments that the town where her son lives in Massachusetts charges an annual fee to residents who want to recycle so that residents who don’t want to recycle don’t have to have their tax dollars go to a service they don’t use.

Discussion of the Comments Section and how the tallies are organized. Discussion of the Summary Section. Suggestion to take out all editorializing and speculation. Final decision that a Summary Section should only reflect what can be absolutely supported by the numbers. Cathy Curtis thanks Betsy Steen for all her work.

Patrick McDonough adds a comment in the chat box: “I think there’s a lot of misconception in the general public about what we have now and that it’s drastically different from what we were doing out of the Barn. With a few exceptions, what we were doing then is the end result of what we’re doing now. Meaning single-stream. I know of several people who think we’re just throwing things in a dumpster. Not necessarily to be discussed no, but maybe we can get info out there that we ARE recycling.”

(Patrick McDonough leaves the meeting for another obligation at 7pm.)

Materials Requirements Chapter: Bryan Benson reports that most of the numbers in the spreadsheet are correct other than the numbers for baled plastic since the program doesn’t bale plastic. Susan Drucker asks Bryan Benson to clarify that if someone wanted to calculate square footage needs based on the spreadsheet, whether everything necessary would be in this document. Betsy Steen offers that estimates for cans may not be accurate as the program never baled cans, but she notes the Pilot Program fills a bin each drop-off day — although they’re not crushed. She also didn’t know how long it would take before there would be a truckload, and therefore the storage needs can’t be calculated. David Berry says that there is plenty of documentation on what the program used to put out before switching to single-stream, and he would be happy to provide those documents. Susan Drucker comments that those numbers are what “we should be so fired up about getting” in order to be able to provide the square footage numbers to the Select Board as soon as possible, and while she appreciates the other work that is going on, that these numbers are what really ought to be being solidified, verified as accurate, and then finalized. Susan Brown comments that the person she spoke with in China about their program wishes they had built a much bigger building than the one they did; she believes that as markets change, so will the need to store things before selling them, and that we should err on the side of more square footage, not less. She adds that her dream is for the program to buy the machine that takes mixed paper and turns it into briquettes. David Berry offers to help determine what used to be shipped (pre-single stream) and how much storage space had been required. His recollection is that it required almost all of the second and third floors, or about 15,000 square feet, and it also included the back end of the barn with its additional open-ceilinged vertical space. Lisa Wesel asks if David Berry could get numbers for plastic, as well as the years that the numbers were from. Cathy Curtis re-asks Bryan Benson if he feels that the numbers on the current spreadsheet are accurate; Bryan Benson reiterates that there isn’t current information on plastic or baling metal cans. He notes that he has never seen cans baled, and wonders how it would be done; David Berry comments that St. Georges bales cans in the same kind of baler that the town owns (a Philadelphia Tramwell baler).

Cathy Curtis notes that we should add the Hazardous Waste space requirement details into the Materials Requirements document.

(Betsy Steen leaves the meeting for another obligation. Question as to whether Michael Smith was still present; he is not. Concern about whether there was still a quorum; no one is sure. Decision that since we would not be voting on anything, that it is probably okay to continue with the meeting.)

Budget Information Chapter: Michael Smith is not present, so no available updates. Cathy Curtis wonders if a budget chapter should be part of the report. Susan Brown thinks it should be. General agreement. Cathy Curtis will email Michael Smith.

Comparison of Pre-Covid Budget with Current Program Budget Chapter: Michael Smith is not present, so no available updates.

Glossary of Terms: Cathy Curtis will work on that as chapters are finalized.

Modes of Recycling Services Chapter: Cathy Curtis notes that Casella will be presenting to the Committee at our next meeting on May 5th. She asks Bryan Benson if there are any programs other than Ecomaine and Casella; Bryan Benson answers that they’re the only game in town for recycling, but there are other Solid Waste options. Susan Drucker adds that there is the option of hauling some materials ourselves, and selling materials to mills and brokers. Susan Drucker notes that she created a preliminary document comparing costs of services and asks Bryan Benson if he could go over the document with her; they will email.

Summary of Committee’s Work Chapter: Cathy Curtis will update her Town Report document to include what the Committee has done since she wrote the initial report in February. Susan Drucker asks if the initial report includes the number of times the Committee’s tasks have been changed since the inception of the group; Cathy Curtis thinks there are references to that, but will make sure. She notes that she has updated the Google Drive folders and that all of our documents should be there now.

Lisa Wesel comments that the “Town-by-Town Comparison” she wrote includes a written summary of what Bowdoinham’s program looked like before Covid and what it currently looks like, but that it didn’t include costs. She suggests that Michael Smith might not need to do the “Comparison of Pre-Covid Budget with Current Program Budget” chapter if we combine Lisa’s Town-by-Town document with the costs listed in Susan Drucker’s “Modes of Services” document. Lisa Wesel suggests that the Modes cost comparison should include a footnote that the town’s hauling costs will go down using the F550.

Susan Brown asks Bryan Benson how many hours he works for the town; Bryan Benson answers that he’s paid for 24, but usually puts in 30 plus hours a week. Susan Drucker comments that she heard the budget includes additional hours for him next year and asks how that will change things; Bryan Benson answers that he believes two hours are being added. Susan Brown asks how many hours employees have to work to qualify for benefits: Bryan Benson doesn’t know, the Solid Waste Department is all part time.

**New Business**

**Information about Terracycle:** Tabled until next meeting due to time.

**Public Comments**: Bryan Benson asks about two file suffixes that he is unable to attach to the Committee’s page on the town website; Cathy Curtis will double check.

David Berry says that he is happy to help out with whatever anyone might need, and that he would like to see the Materials Requirements document if he could. Susan Drucker said that she will follow up on that with him.

**Follow-Up items**: Cathy Curtis will reach out to the Select Board about meeting with them at their next meeting on April 27th. She will try and attend, but if not, Lisa Wesel and Susan Brown said that they will be able to go. Cathy Curtis says she will be able to be there at least for the beginning.

Members should work on their documents and read over each other’s documents in order to start tying things up.

Susan Brown asks if we can agree that 15,000 square feet (David Berry’s estimate of the space the town used to use) is what we need for a building, not 5000 (Michael Smith’s estimate when discussing costs for a new building). She comments that she is worried about space issues. Lisa Wesel believes that we won’t know space requirements until we go through things “program by program”, and decide what we want to continue with, or add or delete. Susan Brown asks if we don’t already have that information from the Survey; Lisa Wesel says that we need to “really go through them when we’re doing our report…when we’re doing our recommendations…and we’re not at that point”. Lisa Wesel continues that when we “get to that next phase and we talk about our recommendations, we really just need to talk about every possible permutation… because in theory, it could be a smaller program; we need to be open to that.” Susan Drucker comments that she believes one of the questions the Select Board will be asking is when we will be able to get to that “next phase”, and she thinks it would be helpful to talk about that timeline “quickly, right now”; she asks when members think we will have enough information to get a square footage estimate. Lisa Wesel says that we are basically done researching and “once we lay out what we’ve already gotten into some useable way…that once we write our interim report, that’s going to help us get our thoughts together, and…that basically within the next month we need to start talking about where we go.” Cathy Curtis agrees. Susan Drucker says that other than plastics, it seems that we have what we need; it seems like we should be able to pull it together. Lisa Wesel continues that while she doesn’t know how it would work, that we will need to come up with a system to figure out what “our collective priorities are.” She notes that this will be very hard without being able to be in the same room. Cathy Curtis agrees that it is very hard to sort through information without being able to physically move documents around; that computer screens only let you look at a few documents at a time. Lisa Wesel wonders if we could meet together outside when it gets warmer. (Question, and no consensus, as to whether meetings have to be recorded or not; if they do, we couldn’t meet outside.) Lisa Wesel suggests that if we could meet outside, we could use the same system that the Comprehensive Planning Committee uses with “huge flip charts” listing “every possibility” with people putting different colored dots on each possibility based on their priorities. She notes that once we have an idea of our initial priorities, costs estimates could change them. Susan Brown asks how we would determine what things would cost; Lisa Wesel says that the town will determine that (although notes that the Select Board has gone back and forth about whose job it is to figure out the costs). Susan Brown says that if we tell the Select Board “this is what was wanted, this is the space that’s needed — and then they wanted us to come up with our ‘dream recycling program’; I have a few recommendations about what I’d like for some forward-thinking operations that might be able to make a little money, or at least not go in the red”. Lisa Wesel agrees and that that’s part of the conversation we have to have — if we’re going to design a program that “exactly fits what we know we have, or if we’re going to build in any flexibility”; she believes the smart thing to do is to build in flexibility, so “that’s what we need to decide.” Susan Brown comments that “forward-thinking will be fiscally more responsible and will appeal to the fiscally conservative.”

Bryan Benson asks if Susan Brown knows the name of the machine that makes the briquettes out of mixed paper: she does not, but plans on speaking with the person at the China recycling facility who does. She remembers that the machine costs $15,000 and that you need a water source but you never have to ship out mixed paper again, and that it could match up in a number of possible ways to home heating assistance.

**Next Agenda**: Casella presentation: Cathy Curtis asks Bryan Benson if he could find out how long the presentation might be so she can determine how ambitious our next agenda should be: Bryan Benson says that he thinks it will be more of a Question and Answer type of thing, that their sorting process is almost identical to Ecomaine’s. Cathy Curtis asks members to review Ecomaine information in order to get some comparative questions together.

Synthesizing Interim Report: Cathy Curtis says that she is compiling report documents into one file on the Google Drive so that members can look things over more easily. Lisa Wesel suggests that we “group edit” documents on the Drive before our next meeting, rather than going through things line-by-line together, in order to save time.

**Next Meeting**: Wednesday, May 5th, 5:30pm.

**Adjournment**: Cathy Curtis adjourns the meeting at 7:30pm.

Addendum 1: Hazardous Waste Email from Michael Smith to Bryan Benson:

“Brian

a couple questions.  I thought at a previous meeting you mentioned that you were accepting tires or maybe you just picked one off the street and got rid of it.

Is recycling presently accepting tires, hazmat, fert, pest etc?   Have all those items been disposed of?  If not, where are they presently stored?

There was a Pre Covid document listing all the items accepted. Would it be possible to get a copy of that document?

Would you identify the items no longer accepted on that list?

Thank you

Michael

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Response from Bryan Benson:

We are only accepting mixed recycling, paint, fluorescent bulbs , mercury and batteries. Tires were found along a town road so I took them to Lee tire and disposed of them.”