**Solid Waste Committee**

**Minutes March 24, 2021**

**Present:** Cathy Curtis, Lisa Wesel, Susan Brown, Michael Smith, Patrick McDonough, Susan Drucker, Betsy Steen, David Berry, Martha Cushing, Mark Favreau

**Call to Order:** Cathy Curtis calls the meeting to order at 5:30pm. Susan Brown apologizes for missing March 10th’s meeting due to a family medical issue.

**Amendments to the Agenda:** No amendments to the agenda.

**Approval of the Minutes from March 10, 2021:** Lisa Wesel notes some typos, and that Addendum 1 mistakingly lists Woolwich’s recycling program, not Dresden’s. Susan Drucker (secretary) notes that she would like to shorten a quote of Michael Smith’s for clarity. Lisa Wesel moves to approve minutes; Michael Smith seconds; all approve.

**Old Business**

**Review Information from the 3/23/21 Select Board meeting as it Pertains to the Committee**: Lisa Wesel updates that the Board, prompted by Peter Lewis, is looking into legally designating the Recycling Barn a Dangerous Building. Lisa Wesel’s understanding is that the Board needs to weigh what David Berry is planning to do with the building against whether or not it would be a “dangerous use”, then there will be an evaluation of the use plan and who will be in the building. Betsy Steen adds that the evaluation has been “handed off” to Darren Carey (code enforcement officer) who has been tasked to discuss the building and its use with David Berry. She notes that David Berry was at the Select Board meeting with his hand raised, but was never called on to speak. David Berry confirms that he will be meeting with Darren Carey on March 25th. Susan Drucker adds that she believes Darren Carey will also be reviewing the Fire Marshal’s report and the two Engineering reports and determining if they are being (or will be being) implemented. David Berry notes that Calderwood Engineering wrote on October 26th that without snow and with adherence to the weight limits on floor loads, that the building could be opened to the public.

**Update on Casella Presentation:** Cathy Curtis asks if Bryan Benson has any news on Casella’s spokesperson’s availability; Bryan Benson does not, but restates that they were booked through mid-April the last time he spoke with them. Cathy Curtis asks him to follow-up and book any date they have that matches up with Committee meetings.

**Update on Recycling Facility Location Feasibility Study** (see “Facility Feasibility Studies Costs Proposals” on Solid Waste Committee’s page on the town website): Cathy Curtis shares a financial table from the Town Manager on the two studies requested by the town in regard to recycling facility location options. The two proposals are for a new facility design at the Public Works property ($38,900 by Pine Tree Engineering) and design adjustments and repairs/improvements to the Recycling Barn ($26,500 by Calderwood Engineering). The remaining $15,000 in the finance table reflects the remaining amount left to be spent in the $24,000 topographical/wetland study of the Public Works land. Betsy Steen believes that the $80,400 total is a more recent version of the $30,000 dollar amount that “we had heard about” earlier; the new totals were presented at the Select Board’s Capital Projects meeting on March 16th. Susan Brown asks what the projects will actually cover; consensus belief that it would be just for the design work, and that neither study includes architect or actual construction costs. Susan Brown wonders who will be coming up with the details needed to begin a design; Bryan Benson says that they are waiting for the committee to come up with the square footage based on what the residents want in a facility. Michael Smith asks for clarification that they are just proposals, not contracts; Bryan Benson confirms they are proposals (other than the $15,000). Betsy Steen asks if the topographical/wetlands study is complete: Bryan Benson says that it is, other than waiting for the designation about the two vernal pools on the property; he believes there is a three week window in April when a determination on a vernal pool’s significance can be made.

Lisa Wesel reiterates that she asked at the last meeting to see copies of each proposal in order to know what the town has asked the engineers to do; she would like to see the both the Request for Proposals along and the responses. She also would like clarification about how the studies are being presented to voters; whether they will be listed as single articles or as a combined article. She notes that the $15,000 left to be spent on the topographical study has already been allocated by the Select Board and wonders why it is included as part of a new total. Michael Smith points out that these are just proposals “that are in a budget of what they think they might want to do, not what they are going to do…”, since “why there would be a proposal for a study on the barn or a new facility when you don’t even know what the facilities are going to be?” Patrick McDonough suggests that maybe a new facility proposal could be based on population size and what’s been done in other places, both locally and nationally; he asks for clarification as to why there needs to be a new engineering report done on the barn when one was already completed earlier this year. Bryan Benson offers that the work on the barn will include improvements that need to be made by the town (not the landlord) in order to address public safety and usage. Cathy Curtis says that she will take these questions back to the Town Manager.

Lisa Wesel expresses frustration that the Committee continues to have to spend so much time trying to track down what the Select Board and the Town Manager are thinking about Solid Waste and Recycling, and wishes that relevant information could simply be shared with the Committee as a matter of course.

Mark Favreau (Select Board member) joins the discussion by noting that there was never a $30,000 proposal as was stated earlier, only a $24,000 study for a study on wetlands and topography at the Public Works developable land site. The $38,900 New Facility Design on the Public Works land will be based upon what residents want in a facility as determined by the Committee; Pine Tree Engineering has said that the $38,900 would only cover “the first piece of the design”. Calderwood Engineering was chosen for the barn redesign because they already have the dimensions and engineering information on the barn; again, the Committee needs to provide the specifics about the program before Calderwood can begin their design work. He explains that if “we move back to the barn, we’ve got to be completely built out different.” None of the engineering would include “the facility shell”, it would just be for “our build-out inside.” He lists the need for new walls to separate the public from operations, as well as security. Once the town has the Committee’s report, that information will be given to the engineers. Lisa Wesel asks for clarification that the barn study would not include any of the past safety concerns; Mark Favreau confirms that to be the case. He notes that it is not up to the town to fix the structure of the barn.

Lisa Wesel asks Mark Favreau if it would be possible to have any relevant information about solid waste emailed to the Committee whenever it comes up. Mark Favreau notes that there are day-to-day operations “that we deal with, with the current thing” and that they really want the Committee to concentrate on getting those design and usage details to the engineers. He notes that when the Select Board brings the design proposals to the residents at town meeting, that they need to be able explain to the public what the design is going to be for. He goes on to say that once the proposed design studies are approved, residents will be able to decide on which project to pursue either at a special town meeting or at the 2022 town meeting. Lisa Wesel asks if the Select Board expects the Committee to have a final report in time for this year’s town meeting; Mark Favreau answers that “whatever you can get us” prior to the meeting would be helpful.

Susan Drucker asks if the two studies are going to be voted on as separate articles, or together; Mark Favreau replies that they will be voted on together since there wouldn’t be any other way to compare the two projects to determine which project would be the better choice. Susan Drucker wonders if separating the two studies in the voting process could act a straw poll about what residents’ inclinations might be about rebuilding or building new. She notes that based on the current Public Works building as a model, a new facility could cost upwards of 2-3 million dollars, whereas buying, repairing, and remodeling the barn would cost significantly less. She adds that giving residents the option to buy the barn allows cost to be a stand-alone consideration. Mark Favreau states that the town needs to do both studies in order to decide which building would be best for the town. He notes that the cost of a new facility can’t be compared to the Public Works building as the infrastructure of the Public Works building is “ten-fold” what a recycling facility would need. He believes that a new recycling building would be far from 2-3 million, and that the amount needed to build-out the barn might be closer to $500,000. Susan Brown notes that without dimensions, the cost for a new facility is still an unknown, and believes that combining the two studies into one article could set up a situation where residents might vote down the entire package and “make our work for naught”. Mark Favreau adds that Calderwood will be doing a ten-twenty year life expectancy for the building, and noted that we don’t want to spend $200,000 - $300,000 on a build-out and find that the shell of the building doesn’t have that needed life span. He concludes that the only way to compare apples to apples is to have both studies done. He believes the other members of the Select Board feel the same way. Susan Drucker asks for clarification as the whether the Board considers buying the barn a possible option; Mark Favreau acknowledges that David Berry has asked for a $150,000 sale price which could be added to the build-out cost in order to determine the total expenditure. Susan Drucker emphasizes that that possibility needs to be made clear to residents as many of the survey comments spoke about not wanting to put money into a building that the town doesn’t own. Mark Favreau notes that if the life expectancy study shows that the building won’t last long as an industrial building, purchasing the barn would not be a consideration. He adds that those considerations are a long way away. Betsy Steen states that the collated comments from the survey will help shed some light on the residents’ feelings. Susan Brown asks whether Mark Favreau agrees that it’s important for residents to know that buying the barn is an option; Mark Favreau answers that yes, as one member of the Board, he agrees that all options should be on the table. David Berry notes that he will be raising the sale price of the barn to $175,000 due to the cost of a new floor and foundation work at the east end of the building, and notes that there are some “attractive options [for a sale] out there” although he prefers that the building remain a recycling facility.

**Bryan Benson’s Answers to Michael Smith’s Operation and Finance Questions** (see “Operational Details” on the Solid Waste Committee’s page on the town website):

Electronic Waste: Patrick McDonough asks if the “12 pallets” listed under electronic waste is the number of pallets required for shipping; Bryan Benson clarifies that it is. He adds that URT has offered a 40’ trailer that would stay onsite which they would collect once it was full, but that the trailer would require its own loading dock. David Berry asks how long it would take to fill a trailer; Bryan Benson estimates about a year. Betsy Steen asks how long it would take to collect 12 pallets worth of electronics; Bryan Benson estimates that it could take about half a year, but emphasizes that it accumulates at a very unpredictable rate. He adds that electronic waste can be stored outside in shed or trailer as long as it’s kept dry, that it doesn’t need to be in a heated facility. Cathy Curtis thanks Bryan Benson for putting all the information together.

Tire Disposal: Lisa Wesel asks if the fee charged to residents for dropping off tires covers the costs of disposal; Bryan Benson says that his notes don’t include a deduction of the revenue from the disposal costs. Patrick McDonough estimates that about 75% of the disposal fees are covered by revenue. Bryan Benson notes that loader tires (which can cost $125 for disposal) and tires found on the side of the road (which are free to drop off) can throw off the numbers. Michael Smith concludes that if the town recycles about 170 tires a year and that if revenue from collection is about the same as the costs for disposal, that it would come down to whether we want provide enough room in a building to store tires at no profit, or whether residents ought to take them somewhere else. Lisa Wesel asks Bryan Benson if it’s true that tires can be dropped back at tire stores for less than what residents have to pay the town; Bryan Benson confirms that that is true; Bryan Benson notes that since there is no storage space at the Public Works he has been taking residents’ tires down to Lee Tire himself.

Hazardous Waste: Michael Smith asks if there is a list of the pesticides/insecticides that the program collects; Bryan Benson says that because he is not an applicator, there is no requirement to fill out a Material Safety Data Sheet. Michael Smith asks whether residents pay a fee to drop off hazardous waste; Bryan Benson confirms that they do but that the fees don’t come close to covering the disposal charges. Michael Smith asks Bryan Benson if he could get him a copy of the hazardous waste fee schedule; Bryan Benson says that he thinks it’s on the town website, but that he will. Lisa Wesel asks if there has been any discussion about raising the fees; Bryan Benson says that there has been but they don’t want to turn people away and have the material end up being disposed of improperly; Lisa Wesel agrees.

**Bryan Benson’s Report on Town Recycling and Solid Waste News:** Bryan Benson reports that there will be a bulky waste collection day on April 17th. He mentions that he has gotten a few calls from people hoping to be able to sort through the dropped-off materials, but with no storage space available he can’t accommodate those requests, that items have to go straight into the truck. Maine law also mandates that he can only keep materials on the premises for 48 hours and collection can only happen twice a year. April 17th is also roadside clean-up day; he explains that if residents want to walk the roads and pick up trash, they can come by Public Works at 8:00 am to pick up bags and gloves and then can drop off any filled bags at no charge. He updates that he is still trying to get the baler hooked up at the Public Works building. Lisa Wesel asks if having more outside space(and good weather) at a future facility would allow for bulky waste to be left outside for the first day in order for residents to look through furniture and etc.; Bryan Benson says that he is looking through DOP’s Maine laws and what permitting and set-back requirements have to be met in order to legally collect bulky waste, but if there is enough room at a future facility, leaving it out for a day should be possible.

**Review Materials Requirements Document** (See “Materials Requirements 1” on the Solid Waste Committee’s page on the town’s website): Patrick McDonough reports that he pulled together all the information that Committee members have researched so far and has plugged it into the resulting spreadsheet. He notes that we can add columns and additional information as it comes in.

Michael Smith comments that as far as cardboard, the “Minimum Load for Transport” column ought to also reflect allowable smaller loads; Bryan Benson comments that a “Minimum Load” is what would be shipped directly to a mill in a full tractor trailer; the smaller loads that he has in mind for cardboard would be loads that are transported in the town truck to Casella’s facility in Scarborough. Michael Smith responds that “you and the town” have determined that it is cheaper to bale and transport three bales of cardboard ourselves than it is to put it in a dumpster, and that this should be taken into consideration as an alternative way to reduce costs. Michael Smith goes on to say that the same idea could apply to other materials, and that we need to avoid getting stuck on how big the recycling barn was and how much could be stored there when there may be other ways to process materials that also save money.

Plastic: Lisa Wesel asks how plastics storage requirements can be determined if plastics are part of the single-stream collection process and therefore not weighed or baled separately; Bryan Benson confirms that there would be no way to get that information. He adds that plastic would also take longer to bale than cardboard because it “has a memory” (e.g., wants to expand). David Berry comments that historically the program collected 5 - 7 tons of #2 clear plastic each year, 2-3 tons of #2 colored plastic, and about a ton of #1 plastic; he agrees that Bryan Benson is right that it takes longer to bale but notes that it doesn’t require more labor hours, just time, because an employee can load the baler and then go do something else. He also notes that unbaled plastic takes up a lot of storage space. He estimates that it used to take about 24 pallet boxes worth of plastic to make a bale. Lisa Wesel asks if the pallet boxes can be stacked; David Berry confirms that they can be stacked two high.

Susan Drucker asks Bryan Benson to weigh in on the accuracy of the information as it’s presented on the spreadsheet. Bryan Benson says that this is the first time he’s seen the document, so he will look it over and report back.

**Update on Town Report Chapters**:

Survey Comments Analysis (see “Survey Comments Analysis” and “Survey Comments Analysis Notes” on the Solid Waste Committee’s page on the town’s website): Betsy Steen explains that the Survey had two opportunities for open comments: one asking about the future of the recycling program, the other asking about Additional Services. She went through and created a column for every type of comment and then counted how many times that comment was mentioned. She notes that she considered anything over 10 similar comments as a significant indicator.

Susan Brown adds that the Fees question in the Survey (e.g., whether residents would be willing to pay a fee to use a facility) showed that 51% would not be willing to pay extra, and 49% said they would be willing to pay extra. She will send the complete analysis document along to the Committee soon.

Several members of the Committee thank Betsy Steen for such a thorough analysis.

Micheal Smith wonders if there might be a way that Betsy Steen could make a list of just the “Over 10” responses; Betsy Steen comments that she already has a list of “Areas of Greatest Agreement” (in the Notes section of her report) which highlights any topics that generated 10 or more similar responses.

Side-By-Side Comparison of Current and Pre-Covid Recycling Programs: Michael Smith says that he still needs the financials from July 1st, 2020 to at least January 1st 2021 in order to start that work. He believes he asked for those numbers already but hasn’t gotten them, and notes that he would prefer raw data over rolled-up data. Cathy Curtis asks if Bryan Benson could work on that; Bryan Benson says that they have tried to gather that information before and “it actually crashed the computer because if was over 400 documents”, but he will ask Eli Rubin again and see what he can come up with. Cathy Curtis asks Michael Smith to write down exactly what he wants from the town; he says that he will.

Description of Three Comparative Towns: Report is in process.

**Two-Person Sub-Committees:** Not currently relevant.

Lisa Wesel suggests that the “Interim Report” mentioned at the Committee’s last meeting could be the document that Cathy Curtis wrote for the town’s annual Town Report; Cathy Curtis agrees that that would work well.

**New Business:**

Determine Tasks: Cathy Curtis asks members to continue working on their assigned tasks. Susan Brown will submit her report on China’s recycling program as well as the Fees analysis from the town recycling survey results. Patrick McDonough will continue working on the Materials Requirements spreadsheet; he will include a paragraph introducing “what those numbers are and what they’re not”. Lisa Wesel will start researching Plastics and will begin writing the Three Comparative Towns report. Susan Drucker will continue preparing and submitting meeting minutes and re-do the Ranked Services document as per Michael Smith’s request to break the percentages down using only 0-1 responses and 4-5 responses so that the more neutral responses (e.g., 2 and 3) don’t skew the results. Michael Smith will compare financials between Pre-Covid and current budgets.

Susan Drucker comments that she hopes that with Patrick McDonough’s Materials Requirements data along with Ranked Services data and Betsy Steen’s report on Survey Comments, that we are not that far away from being able to determine a square footage recommendation. Michael Smith believes that those numbers aren’t necessary until the residents approve the two design proposals costs, and that getting those numbers beforehand is “putting the cart before the horse.” Lisa Wesel says that her understanding is that residents need to vote to appropriate money for the studies, but that the town won’t start those studies until they have the Committee’s recommendations — that they need that information for the engineers. Michael Smith says that they can’t go ahead with the studies until residents approve them, so therefore there is no rush for us to finish earlier. He also points out that considering how expensive this year’s budget already is, that it’s possible that the feasibility proposals may not be passed by the residents. Lisa Wesel comments that once we have all our information and are able to determine space requirements, that we will then need to begin the important philosophical conversations about what a facility ought to accomplish, especially what opportunities we can include that would encourage Reuse. She agrees with Michael Smith that we’re going to need more time. Susan Drucker asks Bryan Benson if he thinks if we should be hurrying to get a square footage estimate to the Select Board; Bryan Benson replies that he doesn’t see square footage as being as much of a priority as what residents want in a program. Susan Drucker maintains that at least beginning to synthesize some of our information would be useful; Cathy Curtis notes that we are getting closer. Susan Brown comments that “we do have some numbers” and agrees that it would be helpful to aim at getting those square footage answers.

David Berry notes that the design for a new facility can’t begin until the Committee has determined square footage requirements, but the study on the barn could presumably kick in as soon as voters approve it (assuming they do). Lisa Wesel comments that the program might not end up using the barn in the same way that we did before (not using the 2nd or 3rd floor, for instance) so a revamped barn design couldn’t be worked up without a square footage recommendation either. David Berry wonders what will be included in the barn study; Lisa Wesel answers that she believes it would include a redesign of some of the operations lay-out, and notes again that engineers would not be able to develop a design until there was an estimate on how much space would be necessary. David Berry notes that there are floor load specifications and roof requirements already determined for the barn which, if addressed, would make square footage determinations unnecessary since there would be enough available space for any kind of program. He also notes that the new window portals would solve the safety problem of the public being in the baling and work areas.

**Public Comments**: Martha Cushing thanks the Committee for their work and “with all due respect to Mr. Berry” points out that the charge for this committee is to “find the program to satisfy the citizens of Bowdoinham first”. She thinks that Mark Favreau gave the Committee good information tonight. She thanks Bryan Benson for reiterating that “it is the program” that matters, and for his contributions for making the current program work. She “would just admonish” the Committee to “please stay on task, and remember it’s the program for the citizens of Bowdoinham that is your initial charge.”

**Agenda Items for Next Meeting**: Continue reporting on our research.

**Next Meeting**: Wednesday, April 7th, 5:30pm.

**Adjournment**: Cathy Curtis adjourns the meeting at 7:36pm.

Addendum 1: Proposed Feasibility Studies Costs

Addendum 2: Bryan Benson’s Answers to Operations Questions

Addendum 3: Materials Requirements Spreadsheet

Addendum 4: Survey Comments Analysis