Solid Waste Committee

February 24, 2021 Minutes

**Present:** Cathy Curtis, Patrick McDonough, Susan Brown, Susan Drucker, Lisa Wesel, Bryan Benson, Michael Smith, Martha Cushing, David Berry, Betsy Steen Mark Favreau, “Craig” (zoom tag), Paul Denis

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

**Amendments to the Agenda:** Lisa Wesel will report on Woolwich’s Recycling Program instead of Dresden’s.

**Approval of Minutes from 2/10/21**: Lisa Wesel motions to approve the minutes; Susan Brown seconds; all approve.

**Old Business:**

**Review any information from Select Board’s 2/23/21 Meeting as it pertains to the Committee**: Michael Smith reports that the Select Board turned down David Berry’s request to borrow the glass crusher for the Source Separation Pilot Program; they also declined his request to reintroduce curbside recycling pick-up during the program. Betsy Steen reports that the Select Board also rejected David Berry’s proposal to lease the recycling barn for one year while the town works out the details for a permanent location for the program. Bryan Benson notes that by not committing to the one year lease the Select Board was in part trying to make sure the Solid Waste Committee’s eventual findings would be included in the Board’s decision-making process. Susan Brown asks why the town won’t let David Berry borrow the glass crusher if they’re not planning on using it; David Berry says that it is understandable that the town wouldn’t want to lend it out (and notes they did offer to sell it to him), and that he will still be able to crush glass without the machine.

**Survey Results Update:** Cathy Curtis reports that she is still working on the Comments section to sort out Pro-Barn/Pro-New Location tallies; Susan Brown is also still working on Fees information with Eli Rubin and Madeline Winston’s help.

**Review/Update Recycling Materials Research:** Composting: Susan Brown reports that a composting option is readily available to residents at no cost; Brian Hobart is ready to place barrels at the Public Works site within the next month if space were provided; he would also pick up the barrels each collection day (assuming scheduling worked). She is not sure if the two barrels Brian Hobart has offered will be enough or if there are more barrels available to use from the town. She points out that offering a compost option would help reduce the weight of waste for many residents.

**Update on Research from Other Town’s Recycling Programs:**

Woolwich: Lisa Wesel reports that Woolwich uses Ecomaine for their end market and Riverside for their trucking; due to Riverside’s schedule, they split the town in half, collecting trash on two different days; recycling is collected every other week. Getting going under Ecomaine was somewhat slow due to the time needed to educate residents, but after the learning curve, the program has worked very well. The downside to Ecomaine is that they are “a little intense” to work with — they’re very strict and some residents are put off by the myriad of rules — but the program has been able to save the town money. The person Lisa Wesel spoke with noted that Bowdoinham’s program at the barn was “a treasure” and he wishes that Woolwich had a similar facility. Lisa Wesel thinks that their program doesn’t employ any staff and doesn’t have a facility, so comparing budgets is not entirely relevant — but their population is 3,125 and their current budget for trash and recycling is $202,194; $128,050.92 of that is the contract with Riverside. She is waiting to hear back about how they handle hazardous waste. David Berry doesn’t think they take bulky waste or electronics or “anything like that”.

China: Susan Brown reports that China doesn’t offer any curbside pick-up, not even for trash (residents bring all their trash to the facility or use their own dumpsters). Their recycling building is 12 years old and 3500 square feet but they “really wish” they had a bigger building. They use a glass crusher and use the crushed glass for fill. They have an arrangement with a metal collector who picks up (and pays for) their materials once a week. Casella picks up their magazines and newspapers. They don’t do any mixed paper but hope to someday get a paper pulper which makes sellable bricks from the pulp. They compost food waste and give away the finished product to residents. They recycle books, and take residents’ used oil for their waste oil furnace. They take #2 plastic and cardboard. Materials are source-separated by residents. They take bulky waste for a fee (other than metal appliances which are free). They are currently reassessing their fees. They have a contract with a used clothing collection/re-distribution service called Apparel Service. China is a town of 4100. Susan Brown will visit the facility this week and will follow-up once she has their budget figures.

St. George: David Berry reports that he spoke with the St. George manager about their gift shop. Their shop is run by a woman who leases a space in the building for $75 a month, and items are for sale. This model could solve the problem that Bowdoinham had with some gift shop items being more trash than treasure: even if Bowdoinham didn’t lease a space, a dedicated volunteer attendant could to oversee donations. He plans to go down in the next few weeks to watch how they bale cans.

**Continue looking at Michael Smith’s Financial Questions:**

Light Bulb Collection: Bryan Benson reports that light bulb collection boxes for HID, CFL, circular florescent, and U-Tube florescent are 2’ x 2’ x 2’ . Boxes for “strictly CFLs” are 18” x 18” x 2’. For 4-foot florescent bulbs, the boxes are 12” x 12’ x 4’. The program shipped 9 boxes of light bulbs in 2018; 12 boxes in 2019; 10 boxes in 2020; and one box so far in 2021.

Paint Can Collection: Bryan Benson goes on to explain that the “Paint Care” program is at no cost to residents other than minimal labor costs (consumers actually pay upfront for disposal at the time of purchasing paint). Paint Care provides shipping containers and transportation; a minimum of three boxes (each box is about 40” x 40” x 40”) is required to schedule a pick up. Bryan Benson likes the idea of vertical storage using industrial shelving for the paint can collection boxes in order to save space (weight limits of the shelving would need to be investigated).

Batteries: The town takes rechargeable batteries and lead acid batteries. Rechargeable batteries don’t cost the town anything other than minimal labor; 12” x 12” x 8” shipping containers are provided as part of the service, as is pick-up. We ship about five to six boxes a year.

Tires: Tires can be stored in a trailer or under cover outside. The town ships twice a year, typically between 100 and 200 tires; it’s a simple phone call to schedule “BDS” for a pick up but requires a minimum of 100 tires. Depending on the size of the tire, the charge for pick up is anywhere from $2 to $125 per tire. Residents pay the town for the service at the time of drop-off. Patrick McDonough mentions that consumers also pay a fee towards disposal when purchasing new tires and wonders where that fee goes.

Discussion about whether it makes sense to start estimating material storage needs at this point; Michael Smith says until we know how much material is generated and which materials are important to residents to continue to collect, it would be premature to start estimating space requirements.

Discussion about the survey not including specific questions about mixed recyclables (e.g., mixed paper, newspapers, magazines, plastic, metal, and glass) in the recycling survey, that we only focused on the extras. Michael Smith says it’s not too late to do a small sample survey. Lisa Wesel hopes that the program we would end up with would be comprehensive but still flexible enough to respond to changing markets, so picking apart which standard mixed recyclables to include based on a survey wouldn’t offer the most useful guidelines. Susan Brown points out that we still don’t have the numbers to gauge whether single-stream or source-separating is the most cost effective; she says that she will look into those comparisons. She wonders if the two options are something the Committee recommends or whether it’s something the town will vote on. Cathy Curtis believes once we have the financials on the two systems that we can recommend the better option. Lisa Wesel notes that Ecomaine would be a place to look for side-by-side comparisons since they offer the choice between single-source or source-separated materials. David Berry points out that Casella also might take a few bales of materials at a time, but that it’s much more expensive to do partial loads than full tractor trailer loads. Lisa Wesel believes that Ecomaine doesn’t expect full tractor loads and doesn’t charge tipping fees for specifically-sized baled materials; as a non-profit, they also pay member towns for baled materials based on the market value.

Cathy Curtis asks Bryan Benson to follow up with Casella on rescheduling their presentation to the Committee sometime in March.

**New Business:**

Cathy Curtis asks the Committee to brainstorm what “chapters” the final report to the town ought to include. Suggestions: Describe/compare the program that we used to have side-by-side with the current program, including costs; survey results; explain the difference between single-sorting and source-separation, and/or provide a glossary of terms; list the different requirements of each material, either on a spreadsheet or in profile paragraphs, or both; describe three comparative towns’ programs (note that Woolwich and China are almost exactly opposite programs). Susan Brown suggests keeping in mind how the information would be read by someone who has no prior knowledge of the issues (i.e., in as few words as possible)

**Public Comments:** Betsy Steen asks Bryan Benson if there has been any resolution as to how residents who have trouble reaching the Silver Bullet windows might be helped; Bryan Benson answers that he has directed the staff to assist residents by having them put their items in front of the containers and staff would take care of it from there.

**Follow-Up Items:** Continue researching other town’s programs; continue researching materials; continue looking at survey results; Bryan Benson will keep working on Michael Smith’s questions; Susan Drucker suggests in order to move forward we ought to rank the general questions in the survey results (i.e., tires, brush, etc.) to get a quick overview as to which services are priorities and which aren’t — she will do that for the next meeting (discussion as to whether Eli Rubin and Madeline Winston might already be crunching those numbers; Bryan Benson notes that Eli Rubin is deep into the town budget process and might not be able to take on other things; Susan Brown responds that Eli Rubin readily offered to help her get a breakdown of the fees question; she adds that the recycling question is also a very timely and important issue and we shouldn’t hesitate to ask for town assistance).

**Next Meeting:** Wednesday, March 10th at 5:30pm via Zoom.