Solid Waste Committee

Minutes from Sept. 2, 2020

Present: Bryan Benson, Cathy Curtis, Susan Brown, Tessa Kingsley, Lisa Wesel, Susan Drucker, Pat McDonough, Michael Smith, Jeremy Cluchey, Peter Lewis, David Berry, Seth Berry,

Betsy Steen.

Meeting is called to order at 5:40 (delayed start due to Zoom platform problems)

- Cathy Curtis overviews the tasks of committee:

a. Overseeing protocols for keeping the Recycling Barn open during the pandemic.  
b. Containing expenses for the recycling program and problem-solving curbside pick-up contamination.  
c. Addressing the condition of the barn after the Selectboard has reviewed inspections and reports and discussed their findings with David Berry.

- Cathy Curtis reminds the Committee that members should only use email to share information, not to discuss information. Any shared information should be added to the upcoming agenda, and discussion should only happen at meetings. Nicole Briand will be organizing a Freedom of Access Act training for everyone on Bowdoinham committees in the near future.

- Cathy Curtis asks if there are any amendments to the current agenda? There are none.

- Cathy Cutis asks if there are any amendments to the August 19th Minutes. Susan Drucker (secretary) asks to clarify some information; once clarifications are made, Susan Brown motions to accept August 19th Minutes; Lisa Wesel seconds the motion; all members vote to approve Minutes.

**Old Business:**

- Re-opening the barn on Saturdays: Bryan Benson wants to wait to move forward with re-opening considerations until after the next Selectboard’s meeting (Tuesday, September 8th) because that meeting will include the board’s discussion with David Berry about the Calderwood Engineer’s report and the Fire Marshall’s report and the outcome of that meeting will partially determine the safe use of the building. Cathy Curtis concurs that we should wait to continue the barn re-opening discussion.

- Finance follow-up on Michael Smith’s questions from July 22: Bryan Benson’s responses: #1: What is Line 3 in expenses: referred on to town’s finance director. #2: Weekly budgeted vs. actual hours: Budgeted: Director - 22 hours; Position 1 - 20 hours; Position 2 - 14 hours; Position 3 - 10 hours; Position 4 - 10 hours; Actual: one unfilled position. #3: Yearly revenue from trash tags and overall sales of recycled materials: referred on to town’s finance director; #4: What are specific items that need to be rectified in order to be able to re-open the barn on Saturdays: waiting for outcome of Selectboard/David Berry meeting; #5: Detailed breakdown of recycled materials and the revenue they bring in: long list to put together, still working on it.

- Status of the can/glass crusher: Bryan Benson researched the machine online and determined that the it can be used and has the capability to process a ton of glass each shift, which is more glass than the town generates.

- Update on barn inspection reports: Cathy Curtis proposes that we wait for Selectboard’s September 8th meeting to discuss the reports as there will be more additional information available after that meeting. Lisa Wesel asks if the Selectboard will be voting on what to do with the barn; Peter Lewis and Jeremy Cluchey answer that there will not be a vote at that time, just discussion and fact-finding. Lisa Wesel asks when will there be a vote; Jeremy Cluchey answers that the board will be working to understand priorities, time frames, how quickly fixes need to be made, and what the consequences would be if they fixes are not made; Jeremey Cluchey also states that the board will be looking at what kind of collaboration between the town and David Berry will be possible. Lisa Wesel asks if any of those concerns impacts whether the barn can be open both Thursdays and Saturdays; Peter Lewis states that it isn’t clear whether the town should even be using the barn, and while there won’t be an up/down vote on the 8th, the board needs to determine that underlying safety of the barn at that time.

David Berry states that he had a long talk with the Fire Marshall on 8/31and wants people to know the protocols for how Fire Marshall reports: property owners are required to address each violation with a plan for how and when the owner will provide remediation; remediation does not all have to to happen right away, just within a “reasonable”timeframe. David Berry believes that none of the violations require the barn to be shut down, and that the town needs to decide what their responses will be for the things that are the town’s responsibilities (i.e., the boiler) and that David Berry is willing to correct the things that are his responsibilities.

Susan Brown asks Peter Lewis what the committee will get to enable us to move forward if there’s not going to be a vote by the board next week; Peter Lewis says that if we are interested, that we should join the Selectboard meeting, and adds that the reports are only a discussion item in the agenda, so he is not sure what actions might come up. David Berry states that there isn’t anything to hold up the use of the barn.

Cathy Curtis asks for clarification about whether there will be another meeting with the Fire Marshall; David Berry replies that as far as he’s aware, that there will not be another meeting, that David Berry knows what the Fire Marshall wants and that the Fire Marshall should approve David Berry’s responses to the report.

Lisa Wesel asks why we can’t move forward with opening barn on Saturdays if the barn has been found to be relatively safe — if it’s safe to use on Thursdays, then it should be safe to use on Saturdays; there seem to be contradictions as to whether the barn is safe to use or not. Jeremy Cluchey says that he didn’t know that opening on Saturdays was a decision waiting for the Selectboard’s conversation.

Lisa Wesel asks for clarification about whether Nicole Briand said that we could spend budgeted money on another staff member to handle the extra day of sorting; Bryan Benson states that Nicole Briand is “crunching numbers”, but she also “has a lot on her plate”; she has not decided anything yet. Susan Brown asks for clarification about the position was part of the budget and that the position has not filled; Bryan Benson clarifies that that is correct.

- Cathy Curtis asks Bryan Benson if he had reviewed the safety protools for recycling facilities that she had forwarded to him; Bryan Benson said that he hadn’t received the email until the previous night (issues with mail getting bounced back) and that he has not had a chance to look them over yet. Bryan Benson states that his understanding is that the corona virus stays present on any fiber product for 24 hours, and that it remains present on plastic and other similar materials for 72 hours; he adds that bags coming into the barn are often filled with contaminants and that he is going to stick with this protocol for the safety of the staff until he hears otherwise (the only exception is cardboard which they bale everyday). Cathy Curtis states that the forwarded guidelines from the CDC and the Maine DEP don’t suggest that waiting to sort things is necessary; Cathy Curtis also states that the documents are in the committee’s shared google folder. Peter Lewis asks who “owns” that folder. Peter Lewis begins discussion about storing public information on a private account, that the Freedom of Information Act requires documents only be stored on a town owned account. Cathy Curtis says that she would be happy to use another site and that she would discuss it with Nicole Briand.

- Susan Brown makes a motion that the Chair of Selectboard write up a note on Tuesday’s meeting and provide the committee with something to review; Peter Lewis says that a committee can’t make a motion for the board to do anything; he encourages SWC members to attend the Selectboard meeting, and notes that there will also be minutes available. Susan Brown asks how we can access those minutes; Peter Lewis says that he will ask Nicole Briand to have the minutes sent to us, but that it most likely won’t be able to happen until the minutes are approved at the following meeting; Susan Brown reiterates that in that case, a summary would still be useful for us to review in the short-term if we are expected to take action or review information. Jeremy Cluchey offers that he will be summarizing the meeting on Facebook, and that he could write a higher-level overview for the committee. Lisa Wesel asks specifically for Jeremy Cluchey to share any information that would be relevant about moving forward with reopening the barn on Saturdays. Peter Lewis comments that he had heard staff time was biggest obstacle; Lisa Wesel responds that there is an already-budgeted unfilled position on the staff. Bryan Benson confirms that it is a 10 hour position and that it remains unfilled.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- Discussion about what Covid 19 safety protocols are: Cathy Curtis notes that two documents about handling waste (one from the National Waste and Recycling Association, and the other from the CDC; see Addendum 1) don’t mention the need to allow materials time to decontaminate. Bryan Benson says that the only thing the barn staff waits to sort is curbside recycling. Tessa Kingsley would like to know where Bryan Benson is getting his information about holding times; Bryan Benson says that it was based on CDC’s early publications. Cathy Curtis asks Bryan Benson to revisit that decision. Peter Lewis agrees that if we can handle waste within the CDC’s guidelines, we should aim to work around the 72 hour issue and still focus on getting the barn open on Saturdays. Susan Brown wonders why there is a disconnect between handling information. David Berry suggests that early-on contact contamination was believed to be the way the virus spread, but that now they’re saying it’s mostly an airborne problem or right at contact, but that with gloves, masks, and proper handling, contact contamination is no longer considered a problem. Bryan Benson says that he will read over the documents.

- Budgets from Bowdoin and Richmond recycling programs: Patric McDonough looked online for their budgets, but believes that it might be comparing apples and oranges: he is not sure that either town has curbside pick-up, or whether their budget numbers include employees. Bowdoin’s budget is $23,000; Richmond’s budget was $40,000 in 2018.

- Articles in The Times Record: Cathy Curtis notes that the most recent article provides a good overview on how things changed once China established a a higher standard for decontaminated materials (see Addendum 2).

Lisa Wesel adds that there was another article today about Brunswick’s new policy about no longer accepting glass as a recyclable.

Discussion about article from August 27th about the state of the barn: Susan Brown comments that it paints a very gloomy picture; Patrick McDonough comments that the engineer’s report paints an equally gloomy picture. David Berry says that the engineer’s report from 2013 stated that the roof was not in compliance, but that Bill Post was able to find an insurance company that didn’t have a problem with the roof and that policy is still in place; if the roof isn’t up to code, it’s up to the town to fix it, if they don’t want to, decisions will have to be made from there. David Berry wonders why the town is so focused on the barn, when the Coombs Building also has many problems; Peter Lewis notes that the town is working with an architect and adding a sprinkler to address the Coomb’s Building issues and that it is also a building that the town owns; the town is only trying to access what needs to be done with the barn, who is responsible, and what the costs are, and that there are many concerns raised in the engineer’s report.

Cathy Curtis moves the discussion back to the 8/27 Times Record article: Cathy Curtis is concerned about the tone of the article and believes the landlord should have been given a chance to respond in order to provide fair and equal reporting. Susan Brown agrees. Peter Lewis states that reporter Darci Moore did what she wanted, it was not up to him. Cathy Curtis asks Peter Lewis if he was misquoted in the article. Peter Lewis says he was not. Susan Brown notes the the tone of the article wasn’t fair. Peter Lewis says that the information he provided for the article was gathered from employees, residents, and the engineer’s report, and that the statements were completely accurate. SB: Susan Brown wonders if Peter Lewis’s consulted with the Selectboard before making his statements. Peter Lewis said that the statements were his own opinions based on facts and documents and that his opinions are shared by other members of the Selectboard. Cathy Curtis notes that reporters should not have been brought in before issues had been resolved within the town. Jeremy Cluchey points out that the town hasn’t had this conversation yet and that he looks forward to the Selectboard’s meeting next week when the issues can be explored further, that there are many issues and many ways to address them. Tessa Kingsley suggests that discussing news articles are less productive than documents and etc. and that she is not sure these concerns are worth discussing; Cathy Curtis states that as chairperson, that many people share information with her over the course of the two weeks between meetings, and that she makes sure to include the information as part of our agendas; if we don’t want to talk about specific additions that they can be amended out of the agenda at the beginning of each meeting.

- Questions to Bryan Benson regarding current costs: Bryan Benson states that based on the latest market reports, cardboard is at $55/ton dwon from $127/ton; newspaper remains the same at 10/ton; magazines went from 30/ton to 20/ton, and mixed paper remains the same.

Bryan Benson also notes that he and Tessa Kingsley are working on a new Facebook page which will be linked to the town site and controlled by the town.

- Update about education component: Tessa Kingsley has been working on infographics for recycling, the glass issue, and what materials offer revenue. She has sent the graphics to Bryan Benson for approval, and to Cathy Curtis. Discussion about whether there is a way to merge two pages so you don’t lose the current followers when an old page is deactivated.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

- Cathy Curtis adds a question from Paul Denis from the Zoom chat bar: Paul Denis asks if the barn lease available to the public. Peter Lewis says that it has been provided to the committee; Bryan Benson says he has not sent it to the SWC but will do so.

- David Berry asks if part of the next agenda could include asking Bryan Benson to start baling mixed paper over a six week period so that we can get some hard numbers about how long it takes to develop bales and the amount of money that could be saved by not sending it down to West Bath. Cathy Curtis asks Bryan Benson for this thoughts. Bryan benson says that he would have to look into that, that it’s not just about baling, but also about storage and handling: the floors are uneven so bales can only be stored two bales high without risking the forklift tipping; he suggests it might be better to make a few bales, determine their weight, and then use that to determine numbers; he also notes that there still isn’t a market for mixed paper and that there is no longer a safe place to store the bales in the barn.

- Betsy Steen asks if Bryan Benson ever found out about cans and mixed metal. Bryan Benson states that Grimmels definitely doesn’t want any tin cans anymore and that his three calls to another collector hasn’t called back; Bryan Benson says that maybe he will drive out to see if the collector is still in business. Betsy Steen notes that residents would be willing to sort their metal if asked.

**NEXT MEETING:**

Tuesday, September 15th via Zoom. **(Note that the meeting will be on a Tuesday rather than the usual Wednesday.)**

Meeting adjourned at 6:55.

**Addendum 1 links: Handling Solid Waste during Covid 19 (two documents):**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/waste-collection->

recycling-workers.html

https://wasterecycling.org/page/covid19workpractices

**Addendum 2 link: 8/27 Times Record article:**

https://www.pressherald.com/2020/08/27/bowdoinham-honing-in-on-safety-problems-at-recycling-barn/