**Solid Waste Committee Meeting**

**September 30, 2020**

**Minutes**

**Present:** Cathy Curtis, Lisa Wesel, Michael Smith, Patrick McDonough, Susan Brown, Susan Drucker, Bryan Benson, Betsy Steen, David Berry, Peter Lewis, Jacinta Wilkins-Blodgett

**Call to Order:** Cathy Curtis call the meeting to order at 5:30; quorum established.

**Amendments to the Agenda:** Betsy Steen asks if everyone saw the Times Record article about where recycling could be collected now that the barn is shut down; Cathy Curtis says that we will be talking about the new collection site proposals later in the meeting. Susan Brown asks who from town spoke to the Time Record reporter; no one knew.

**Approval of the Minutes:** Tessa Kingsley makes the correction that as far as the new recycling Facebook page, she had not asked that it not be shared by others, but had said that the page itself would not share its own posts with other pages; others are encouraged to “share abundantly”.

Lisa Wesel motions to approve the minutes, Tessa Kingsley seconds, all in favor.

**Old Business:**

**Revisit Task of Committee:** Cathy Curtis begins the meeting by stating that the committee will need to review its task in light of the recent developments at the recycling barn. She explains that Nicole Briand provided a report to the Select Board last week asking them to choose one of three sites where the “Silver Bullet” recycling containers could be placed for the winter (or until the barn is safe to use again or we come up with another alternative). Lisa Wesel asks to be reminded why they can’t stay outside in the barn parking lot; Peter Lewis answers that there needs to be a place for the staff to be inside periodically in order to stay warm during the winter, and that there need to be restroom facilities as well; the barn can no longer provide those accommodations. Lisa Wesel points out that there were already discussions about renting an office trailer at other sites, and if they have to do that anyway then it would be less confusing for people not to have to change locations: Peter Lewis concurs but says that the site has already been narrowed down to one location which can provide those options and they are just waiting for the rest of the board’s approval; he adds that they are also going to be looking at renegotiating with the building owner about the lease agreement since the building is no longer useable. Tessa Kingsley adds that two of the alternate locations (the public works building and the Mailey Waterfront) would provide indoor facilities whereas renting an office trailer at the barn or at the old public works site would still not include a restroom. Peter Lewis states that there are actually four locations (“there was one that wasn’t so highlighted”), and “the fourth is the one we’re leaning towards more, which is the fire station”. Cathy Curtis asks that Peter Lewis share more details about the fire station since it is a detail that the committee was not made aware of until now; Peter Lewis says that it was a conversation that he had had with Nicole Briand “yesterday” and she is leaning more towards that option, “so we’re going to have more conversations about that”. Susan Brown asks what it means to use the fire station. Cathy Curtis asks where the containers would be placed on that property; Peter Lewis is unsure, that he hasn’t seen any plans, and would leave that to the town manager.

Susan Brown asks what the mission of the Solid Waste Committee is since things are moving forward without input from the committee, and that our input doesn’t seem to be needed; Peter Lewis says for that it is correct that as far as the temporary location, the committee’s input is not needed, and that from the beginning our directive was to look into options for a permanent move. Susan Brown says that she is still confused why there is a committee. Cathy Curtis says that her understanding from the last Select Board meeting that the committee has been asked to focus on what to do about curbside recycling; Peter Lewis agrees. Susan Brown asks what the timeline is for the board to be speaking with David Berry, in order for the committee to get back to work on the longterm solutions; Peter Lewis says he doesn’t know that timeline.

**Update on Silver Bullet Containers and Review of Safe Handling Practices:** Cathy Curtis asks Bryan Benson for an update on how the Sliver Bullet containers are working; Bryan Benson answers that the Sliver Bullets are working “surprisingly well”: the staff is right there informing residents what can and cannot go into the containers, and they’ve found very little contamination in the dumpsters themselves, whereas they are still seeing a huge amount of contamination in the curbside recycling bags. Cathy Curtis asks where the staff processed curbside bags last week, Bryan Benson answers that it was processed on Monday after letting it sit 72 hours. Lisa Wesel says that she contacted the Maine DEP (see Addendum 1) in order to find out if their recommendations for letting items sit for 72 hours had been changed since April when the pandemic started. She says that their response was that they didn’t see any benefit to holding items — that safety concerns had much more to do with airborne particles from exposure to the others, not from contaminated materials, especially when wearing PPE. Lisa Wesel asks if Bryan Benson would be comfortable not letting items sit anymore, and if he were, whether quicker processing would help with the storage problem. Bryan Benson answers that the DEP’s response to Lisa Wesel contradicts the email he received from them just two weeks ago. Cathy Curtis says that she did not interpret the Bryan Benson’s email in the same way — that everything she has read doesn’t support the 72 hour hold-time. Bryan Benson disagrees; he says that the DEP states that if you have the space, you should hold material for 72 hours. Lisa Wesel says that she also didn’t read the note as a recommendation to hold material, that neither OSHA or the CDC mention any benefit to holding material. Bryan Benson says that it is recommended to hold material if you want, and asks why he wouldn’t want to err on the side of caution. He points out that holding the material is now actually irrelevant since any temporary location has no options for holding material. Cathy Curtis says that that is what she is trying to point out: that if the materials aren’t held and could be sorted right away, would that allow for the continued processing of curbside materials? Bryan Benson says that “we can’t” because there won’t be enough room in the dumpsters to hold both curbside recycling and public drop-off on the same day; that so far the dumpsters have been emptied four times (120 yards of recycling) in four drop-off days, and that out of the 120 yards, forty yards of it was cardboard, a huge percentage of space. Susan Brown points out that cardboard is also a revenue source. Bryan Benson notes that prices are down for cardboard, and the costs to process it no longer makes it a revenue source. David Berry asks for the total weight of those four loads; Bryan Benson answers that he hasn’t received the bill that would include that information yet. Cathy Curtis asks for clarification as to whether curbside materials were part of those four loads; BB answers yes, and that he has also wanted to make sure that the days that the dumpsters are open to residents that their materials had priority over the available dumpster space, not curbside materials. Susan Brown says that it sounds like we need more dumpsters; Bryan Benson says that another option for cardboard would also solve the problem. Cathy asks if a third dumpster would accommodate everything that came in on a Thursday; Bryan Benson says it probably would but that we would still need space to process the incoming curbside materials, which they won’t have.

Tessa Kingsley asks whether the tonnage tipping fees are in addition to the $360 collection fee; Bryan Benson says that they are in addition to the $360. David Berry asks how much the tipping fees are; Bryan Benson answers that until he gets a bill he doesn’t know. Tessa Kingsley asks whether it seems like it will cost more to use the Silver Bullets than what it used to cost to process materials in the barn system; Bryan Benson says that it definitely costs less to haul the materials ourselves, but if there’s no storage, that that’s not an option. David Berry reiterates that it’s important to know what the tipping fees are per ton in order to understand comparative costs. Bryan Benson believes that our average tonnage is probably close to 1.4 or 1.5 per dumpster based on what he used to haul in the truck; cardboard is taking up a huge amount of space in the dumpsters but it doesn’t weigh much.

Cathy Curtis asks Bryan Benson to clarify that what he is saying is that that we will no longer be able to offer curbside recycling pick-up: Bryan Benson clarifies that yes, he would no longer recommend offering curbside recycling service at any temporary location due to lack of indoor processing space. Cathy Curtis points out that that could create a higher number of residents using the Silver Bullets, and asks if we are going to offer more hours; Bryan Benson says yes, that he is hoping to be open every other day but that he needs to figure out how to orchestrate time for Casella to come and empty the containers (a three day process from when he calls the dispatch to when they arrive); that could limit the ability to be open from four days down to three.

Lisa Wesel asks for a comparison between how much recycling is collected in the new containers (or what we used to collect in the barn) vs. what we collect from curbside; Bryan Benson answers that curbside can range from 300 - 600 bags a week. He explains that residents come in Thursdays and Saturdays and that later, staff compacts the material as best they can in order to fit curbside materials in. Lisa Wesel asks what’s currently being done with curbside materials; Bryan Benson says that he is still collecting it in the barn until there’s another option. Lisa Wesel says theres not really any way to predict how many people will continue to bring in their recyclables if we discontinue curbside pick-up; Bryan Benson agrees that it will be complicated to predict, but that he doesn’t anticipate everyone who uses curbside pick-up to show up at the temporary location; it will all be another learning process.

Betsy Steen asks what people who can’t go to the recycling facility are supposed to do; Bryan Benson says that he knows from a facebook survey that there are neighbors who would step up to help those who were not able to physically get their materials to a facility. Betsy Steen asks whether the dumpsters could be open/available a different day than when Mr. Plummer picks up so that there wouldn’t be the competition for dumpster space. Bryan Benson says that there still wouldn’t be space to process curbside recycling, that the materials have to be taken out of the bags and sorted which can’t happen out in the open (materials would be blown everywhere). David Berry asks why the materials have to be sorted, couldn’t each bag be opened and deposited into the dumpster as is, even if it’s contaminated since there isn’t a different cost for clean vs. contaminated material. Bryan Benson agrees that it might possibly work if the facility weren’t open to the public on that same day but he would need an empty dumpster available; he again notes the difficulty of orchestrating Casella collection, resident drop-off, and container availability. Lisa Wesel asks if there is money in the budget to pay for more than two dumpsters; Bryan Benson says that he can look into it. Peter Lewis adds that there is still the lease agreement/payment to resolve before a new budget can be figured out, and that budget decisions aren’t up to the committee; Lisa Wesel says she understands that and just wanted to know whether more dumpsters were even a possibility; Peter Lewis says that numbers would have to be worked out by the town manager before those questions could be answered. Bryan Benson points out that there’s also the very possible problem that Casella might not have an additional dumpster available to give us, but he will find out. Peter Lewis wonders if we would need additional permitting as well. Cathy Curtis asks Bryan Benson to find answers to as many of these question as he can. Lisa Wesel notes that Jacinta Wilkins-Blodgett, who works at the barn, sent her a note saying that another problem with accepting curbside bags outside is that when all the bags are dumped from the truck, that glass will break and bags will tear and materials will end up being blown around.

Tessa Kingsley wonders whether Bryan Benson had any estimate on the amount of contamination included in curbside pickup and how that extra weight might affect our overall tonnage; Bryan Benson says that contamination can range from 38% up to 77% of curbside collected materials.

Susan Drucker asks for an update on the discussions between David Berry and the town; she feels we’re spending a lot of time and energy talking about alternatives when the ideal facility is still right in front of us. David Berry answers that he spoke to the Select Board at their last meeting and that he had a long visit with Nicole Briand today; they are trying to find a way to figure this all out but it’s going to take time. He adds that he has hired a second engineer to take another look at the situation to see if there are any other ways to address the issues, but no matter what, there is going to have to be a Leasehold Improvement; he believes that there shouldn’t be any real problems coming to an agreement that is satisfactory to everybody, but that it won’t be a quick process, so he believes the use of the Silver Bullets is a good idea for now. He also believes it is important that there are enough dumpsters so there are no limits to collecting material.

Susan Brown says that is frustrated by the “can’t do” answers that the committee is often presented with. She goes on to say that in July the committee was told that there was no price differentiation between clean and contaminated recycling because our materials are simply combined with other towns’ materials, so she wonders why we are holding ourselves responsible to decontaminate the curbside contents. Bryan Benson says that he believes that if we could show Casella the cleanliness of our materials, it’s possible that we could negotiate a better price — he isn’t sure, but it seems like something we could work towards. Susan Brown asks how we could get an answer to that; Bryan Benson says that he can ask Casella when he calls about dumpster availability.

Michael Smith proposes that when recycling is moved to a new location that curbside pick-up should be stopped and the resident drop-off option should be available six days a week. Cathy Curtis asks if there are funds to be open that often. Bryan Benson says he would have to look into it because some of the labor hours budgeted for the position that’s not filled are being used to pay for the engineer’s report and “some of the other things that are going on”; he says it would go back to scheduling to get the dumpsters emptied , but that ultimately, he doesn’t see five or six days as being feasible, but maybe four, and definitely three. Michael Smith asks how many staff there need to be if you’re not handling curbside materials; Bryan Benson says two people will be needed because if he gets into the fire station as the new temporary location, that there is a small storage area available to him: he plans to set up large boxes over at public works, and smaller boxes at the fire station which will allow him to accept a certain amount of hazardous waste, batteries, paint, and etc., and at the end of the day he will need to move that material to the larger boxes at the public works. Michael Smith suggests putting a six month hiatus on all those other programs and just focus on recycling six days a week; Bryan Benson answers that all of the other programs are just as important as recycling.

**Review of Expense/Revenue Details, and Continued Discussion on How to Maximize Revenue and Reduce Costs:** Cathy Curtis asks the committee to look over the financial spreadsheet she and Michael Smith developed (see Addendum 2 and 3). She summarizes that there is an overall loss each year which the town makes up for in their annual budget. Bryan Benson explains the 2020-21 budget projections are based on the continuing rising costs of recycling fees, but that it’s hard to say where that $235,000 will end up; now that he has some data on the new dumpsters he can try and provide some estimates. Lisa Wesel asks if the town stops curbside recycling, she assumes some residents will simply put their recyclables in with their trash, and that that will ultimately save the town money. Bryan Benson agrees and adds that we would save $12,000/year right away by not having to pay Mr. Plummer for that pick-up; he notes that we are contracted with Mr. Plummer for that pick-up, but that Mr. Plummer has agreed to will release us from that part of the contract if need be. Bottom line, the tipping fee for trash is less ($86/ton) than for recycling ($137/ton) Bryan Benson also points out how wide a range recycling fees can be due to an always-changing market: a month ago recycling was down to $84/ton but now it is back up to $137/ton; he believes that the market will eventually get back to running as it used to, and we will eventually be able to at least break even with recycling, but not any time soon.

Cathy Curtis asks when curbside recycling would have to stop; Bryan Benson says that whenever the move happens is when the service will have to stop; he believes the Select Board will be discussing the timetable on Tuesday. Peter Lewis says the timetable will also be based on permitting considerations.

Lisa Wesel points out that getting the word out to the residents about the change of location and the elimination of curbside recycling will be a major undertaking; Peter Lewis adds that because the new location will most likely be the fire station, it won’t be that complicated for residents to make the change, even if they mistakingly go to the present location after it’s closed. Tessa Kingsley wonders if the newsletter will come out in time to be useful; it will not. Peter Lewis suggests that if the usual social media and website announcements aren’t enough, the town could consider a one-time mailing.

Betsy Steen reminds the committee that there had been a discussion about the possibility of keeping curbside recycling with the use of a third dumpster and an additional drop-off day, and she hopes that before a decision is made to stop the service, that those options will continue to be explored. Cathy Curtis says that her understanding is that Bryan Benson will be looking into those options this week, so by our next meeting, we will know more.

**New Business:** Cathy Curtis notes that most topics have been discussed already under Old Business.

Cathy Curtis asks Peter Lewis if there is anything the committee can be doing to get a start on longterm planning; Peter Lewis says he doesn’t think so, that curbside recycling pick-up and notifying the public about the new temporary location should be the priority for at least the coming month, and that even though the next Select Board meeting will hopefully include an update on any conversations between Nicole Briand and David Berry, as well as a directive about the temporary location, that he doesn’t think that any longterm questions will come into play until next spring.

**Public Comments:** No public comment.

**Next Agenda, Next Meeting Details, and Follow-up Items:**

Bryan Benson asks that we schedule our meetings for the rest of the year rather than one at a time. Susan Brown wonders if we should still be meeting twice a month when there seems to be less to do; Peter Lewis suggests that for now there is enough happening that twice a month would be helpful, but maybe tapering off to once a month or even every other month would make sense once the temporary location and curbside questions have been resolved. Tessa Kingsley and Peter Lewis discuss coordinating our meetings with the Select Board’s schedule so there can be a quicker turn-over of new information. All agree to meet twice a month and to coordinate that with the Select Board’s meetings.

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, October 14th at 5:30, and all other meetings for the time being will be the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month.

Susan Drucker asks that we include a follow-up on the Select Board’s October 13th meeting in the next agenda.

**Meeting is adjourned at 6:45.**

**Addendum 1**: **Lisa Wesel’s communication with Maine DEP:**

FYI: I contacted Megan Mansfield Pryor at the Maine DEP to follow up on the letter she sent to Bryan in April RE holding material for 72 hours. I wanted to find out if she had revised her thinking on that, since our understanding of the virus has changed so much since April.

As we also have heard, she said that OSHA and CDC are not recommending that handlers of trash/recycled material hold it for any amount of time before processing it. She said she does not know of any benefit to doing that.

She did say that a study by the Institute for Scrap Recyclers found that the virus can remain viable on surfaces for up to 72 hours, but the virus then would be transmissible only if a person touched the container, and then touched their eyes, nose or mouth. Proper procedures and PPE — which predate the pandemic — would prevent that anyway. She said there is NO evidence that she or any of her colleagues is aware of that the virus on surfaces can become airborne or can be carried by dust particles, which would seem to indicate that it is as safe to handle materials now as a it was pre-pandemic, as long as the normal precautions are taken.

The consensus is that *the biggest risk is person-to-person contact,* so perhaps those are the procedures we should focus on to make sure that interactions between the employees and the public remain safe.

**Addendum 2**: **Expenses summary from Michael Smith:**

Dear Committee,

Attached is an excel spreadsheet that attempts to summarize the financial information we have been given. Michael Smith did the #s work and I inputted into an excel spreadsheet-be sure to notice **all three tabs** in the spreadsheet.

Here is Michael's analysis and thoughts related to that work and the recent Selectboard meeting:

Last week Cathy and I met to finalize a more broad look at the recycling process and costs. Expenses and income figures seem reasonable with budgets and processes. It should be noted that Covid did change figures in the 19-20 FY, specifically the following:  
Labor was lower, trash removal cost increased and trash income reduced due to 3 (if I remember correctly) free months of removal.

It is apparent the $2.50 trash tag revenue does not cover the cost of bag pickup (both tagged and recycling) and the disposal of the trash only.



-$4500 -$14000 -$28000 -$13500

FY 17-18.  
FY 18-19.  
FY 19-20.  
FY 20-21.  
These numbers were taken from revenue 312 (trash tags), expense 28-05 (disposal/curbside) and expense 28-07 (disposal/trash). This data shows that there is a need to restructure tag pricing to make them balance.

In Fy 17-18 the program lost $82k. Recycling lost $77.5k (lease labor utilities use fees and recycling rev/costs)  
Fy18-19 Prog lost $84k and recycling lost $70k  
Fy19-20 Prog lost 91k and recycling lost $63k

Fy20-21 Prog will lose $139k and recycling will lose $125.5k

These #s show that there needs to be discussions on trash tag increases and overall operations.

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With the relocation of the recycling location, I would like to toss out an idea we could discuss at our meeting.

From select board discussion, it would seem a seamless move to Mailly park on Nov 3, is possible. No additional expenses as a building, restrooms and power onsite. This will give the town 6 (six) months to explore options or even move back to the barn, if safe. Since there is no storage for sorting, eliminate curbside for the time being. There are 60hrs budgeted labor hours weekly, no longer recycling (but bullets), maybe a 1 person operation 8-4 Monday- Saturday (48 total man hours). This will keep staff employed, allow the manager an additional 12 hours, and watch the restrooms.

Hope this helps, Michael

**Addendum 3: Expense Spreadsheets (please note that there are three tabs at the bottom of the opening page):**

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/11KmTZTcmoUsI5Q2xPMGgJ1Nwo0DMUqTq