**Solid Waste Committee**

**October 14, 2020**

**Minutes**

**Present:** Cathy Curtis, Lisa Wesel, Tessa Kingsley, Patrick McDonough, Susan Brown, Susan Drucker, Bryan Benson, Martha Cushing, Betsy Steen, Eli Rubin, David Berry, Peter Lewis.

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

**Amendments to the Agenda:** Cathy Curtis would like to discuss the Select Board’s request for the committee to weigh in on the proposed temporary recycling locations.

**Approval of the 9/30/20 Minutes:** Susan Drucker notes that Lisa Wesel emailed three grammar edits which will be made in the final version. Susan Brown explains that she was not making a judgement about Bryan Benson wanting to hold items for 72 hours, that she was only looking for clarification; notes will be changed to reflect that view.

Lisa Wesel moves to accept the minutes; Patrick McDonough seconds the motion; all approve.

**Old Business:**

**Revisiting Norms and Civil Discourse:** Cathy Curtis opens by sharing her thoughts about the committee in regard to communication: (1) A reminder that when information is shared over email, opinions, judgements, and discussions about that information should never be part of those emails; discussion should only occur in-person at committee meetings. (2) A commendation to the group for sticking with the process, that so much has changed since the committee was first formed, and it’s clear that everyone has positive intentions to help the town; she notes that if we can aim to keep that in mind, that our back and forth will be kinder. Susan Drucker adds that the group is indebted to Cathy Curtis’s diplomacy and guidance for keeping the committee on track. Lisa Wesel asks if there are any updates about the Open Meetings and Freedom of Information laws workshops so that it can be crystal clear how everything needs to work; Peter Lewis answers that he believes the town is waiting to organize those tutorials until after the elections because there could be two new board members at that time. Tessa Kingsley asks that when committee members weigh in on Facebook threads concerning recycling that we should aim at presenting a united front that supports our work; she adds that our meeting discussions should be presented evenly on public platforms so as not to undermine our work. Susan Brown adds that members of the committee and town staff might want to refrain from commenting on social platforms as it can quickly become a slippery slope in a sometimes toxic environment. Cathy Curtis suggests that a method for interacting could be to link people to our documents and invite them to our public meetings.

**New Business:**

**Review of the Select Board Meeting as it Pertains to the Solid Waste Committee:** Cathy Curtis explains that the 10/13 Select Board meeting included a lengthy discussion about the pros and cons of the possible new temporary recycling sites, and that citizen objections to using the fire station as a temporary site has most likely taken the station out of consideration. The Select Board has asked the committee to consider the remaining sites and offer our non-binding recommendations. The Select Board is going to be holding a special meeting on Oct. 19 at 6:30 to take a last look at the options and hold a vote to finalize the location, and asks that the committee (or committee representatives) be present. The locations currently being considered are the old Public Works site, the Mailley Waterfront Park, the new Public Works site, outside at the recycling barn, and still possibly the fire station. Cathy Curtis notes that we will be working without a financial overview for each option. (She adds that Nicole Briand has made it more clear that the task of the committee is to envision what the town recycling program ought to look like in the long-run, and what kind of facility would be needed to make that possible.)

Tessa Kingsley asks if there had been any further investigation into town documents to determine whether the fire station had originally been designated as a fire station only (e.g., no additional municipal activity); Peter Lewis says that nothing has been looked into since the Select Board meeting, but the minutes from the town meeting that year do not mention that designation, nor does the deed, but that the board is still considering it a binding obligation based on citizens’ input.

Susan Drucker adds that the 10/13 board meeting also discussed asking neighboring towns if we could use their facilities on a temporary basis. She also wonders if there are more options not being considered at the barn itself (i.e., a discussion about buying the barn so that any money we put into it would be channeled to a town-owned facility; rewriting the lease to cover just the use of the outside space). She would like to see the town work with the barn, not around it, since in the long and short run it is most suitable to the town’s needs. Susan Brown agrees, and asks which other sites would require renting a trailer; Bryan Benson answers that the old Public Works and Mailley Waterfront would be the other sites. Peter Lewis suggests that we take Mailley Waterfront off the list because we don’t know how long the facility will need to be there and if we still need it to be there in the spring and even into the summer, that it will encroach negatively on waterfront use. Tessa Kingsley asks why the recycling barn parking lot wasn’t considered for a temporary location in the original discussions; Cathy Curtis’s understanding is that if the town wasn’t able to use the inside of the barn, that there would be cost-benefits to moving the service to a town-owned property. Peter Lewis concurs that that is the reasoning; he adds that leasing the barn costs the town $1400/month and if we’re not using the building, we would need to renegotiate that agreement; without knowing if renegotiation is possible, the town didn’t want to be committed to staying there. Susan Brown asks who could find out about renegotiating the agreement; Peter Lewis answers that David Berry and the town manager are working that out. David Berry says that he had a conversation with Nicole Briand today and told her that he was totally fine with the town setting up a trailer on the lot (he also notes that there is a small building on the lot available to store some materials which could be saved to top off the dumpsters at the end of a collection day, thereby ensuring that each pick up is a cost-effective full load).

Patrick McDonough asks how long a time period the temporary situation is going to be necessary; David Berry says that he is currently looking to get an idea of what it would cost to get the barn up to code, and at the same time, the town needs to get the figures on what an alternative site would cost; at that point, it would go to the voters to decide whether they want a reconfigured leasehold at the barn or a new facility somewhere else; each would have associated costs. He mentions a scenario where he would double the rent over the course of a ten year lease in order to cover/amortize his costs for retrofitting the building to meet the town’s specific and required needs; at the end of that period, the lease would revert to a lower payment. He points out that he did not make the space unsafe: the town has shelved any improvements on the building since 2013, and he notes that Peter Lewis has signed two contracts knowing that there were safety issues. David Berry is still concerned that the engineer’s report in 2013 didn’t condemn the building, but that with no changes in the building, the 2020 report concludes that no one can even be in the building. Peter Lewis interjects that we need to step back and reset our expectations: he appreciates the information that David Berry has shared, but points out that the 2013 report didn’t deem the building safe, it’s just that no one wanted to spend the money at that time; he points out that the new charge to this committee is not “how do we get back in the barn”, but to determine what the town’s overall goals for a recycling program are; until we know that, there isn’t a need to discuss the long-term use of the barn or any other space. He adds that $1400/month, or even $2800/month over ten years, could pay for a “very nice building for a really good transfer station and recycling facility instead of an old chicken barn that’s been retrofitted and repaired”.

Tess Kingsley asks if placing a trailer in addition to the new dumpsters in the barn parking lot would get in the way of any repairs being made; Peter Lewis says repairs at the barn are not what we need to be discussing; Tessa Kingsley says that her considerations are not about the actual repairs but whether using the parking lot for short-term use could hypothetically impact repairs in the future if that was the route we ended up wanting to pursue.

Eli Rubin introduces himself as the new finance administrator for the town and says that he is available to answer any financial questions that the committee might have. He adds that the town has been compiling a lot of information regarding many of the questions the committee has been asking. They are gathering information about the six properties that the town owns as well as the leasing-out of other areas, and they are especially looking at how those locations might be affected over time (i.e., the difference between a few months or many months). He acknowledges that there are a lot of things up in the air and a lot to be determined, and apologizes for not having more information available at this time.

Patrick McDonough states that he looked at the fire station as a temporary location and wonders who did the engineering on the site; he says that there’s a “whole drainage system behind there” that looks problematic, and that overall, in his opinion, it doesn’t seem like the best place for a site. He asks about the barn’s traffic pattern and wonders whether there would be enough room for the dumpsters, a trailer, and multiple vehicles on drop-off days. He thinks that the old Public Works facility would be a great location based on the amount of space. Peter Lewis answers that Pinetree Engineering did the report on the fire station, and notes that the entire drainage area will need to be redone with a longer culvert; he adds that based on feedback at the Select Board’s meeting the night before, we should be leaning away from the fire station as an option. Bryan Benson comments that the traffic pattern at the barn would stay the way it is, but adds that there have been suggestions to run the dumpsters down the middle of the parking area and have everybody drive in along the building, loop around the dumpsters, and go back out. Lisa Wesel asks where the trailer would be located; Bryan Benson answers that they first need to figure out what size trailer they would get (which is in the works), and then they can better figure out where it can be parked. (He notes that snow plowing makes putting it at the very end of the lot problematic.)

Lisa Wesel points out that there is a “chicken or egg” situation as far as determining the recycling program’s direction and longterm location, that if David Berry and the town reach an agreement as to who is responsible for which repairs, that by itself will determine the facility location, and the committee’s longterm vision will need to be based on that facility. Peter Lewis says that that is why the committee needs to stop thinking about where the program will be and start thinking of what the program will be: if we decide we’re just going to use dumpsters, we don’t need a building; if we just do single stream, we don’t need all the operations the barn offers. He reiterates that the long term vision is first, and that then we can discuss where it can happen. Lisa Wesel says that out of fairness to David Berry, that we ought to establish a quick deadline for deciding. She would like some guidance as to what that timeframe can look like. Peter Lewis says that anything we decide will need to go to a town meeting, and that won’t be until June (unless we have a special town meeting before that). He points out that with Covid restrictions, anything before June seems unlikely since the topic needs to be discussed and can’t be covered in a ballot vote, and that therefore the deadline we should be looking at would be June 2021.

Susan Brown says that in order for us to be able to present a useful overview to the town we would need financials on the different options. She notes that we have had trouble getting to that information and that details keep changing. She doesn’t feel like the committee is simply trying to get back to the barn, but that we are trying to obtain a concrete picture about finances for all facilities, and that it is hard to move forward when the targets keeps moving. Peter Lewis agrees that finances are the bottom line, and that a way to look at it all is that we are starting a recycling program from the very beginning and to gather information on what costs those costs will be. Susan Brown asks how we can determine those costs; Peter Lewis and Cathy Curtis suggest that the committee will need to find some of those answers and that Eli Rubin will be able to provide others. Peter Lewis points out that the cost for repairs to the barn are not part of the short-term location discussion. Eli Rubin adds that from a staff standpoint, what they would really like is a long-term dream vision for services and then the town’s role will be to determine those costs; from there, the committee can rework their report if necessary, and then it can be brought to town meeting for a decision. He points out that what might end up determining the outcome for the temporary location will be DOT permits, set-backs, and financial considerations which are out of our control; it might not end up being perfect but it will be temporary. In summary, he says that they are looking to the committee to supply information about what the goals of the program are and that the staff’s role will be helping to get us there.

Betsy Steen asks if would be helpful to send out a survey to residents asking what they would want recycling to look like and then use that information to help guide the committee. Cathy Curtis says that she thinks that the committee would be very open to that and laments that we haven’t been able to work on as many fronts as we would want to yet. Peter Lewis concurs that a survey would be a great idea, keeping in mind what’s reasonable and cost effective.

Susan Drucker states that she objects to the idea that we’re being told that we can’t consider the barn in our deliberations, and that she is against the idea of building a whole new facility. Peter Lewis says that this is the reason we’re going round and round: he is not saying that the barn can’t be the end decision, but until we know what the operations will look like, there’s no reason to consider a location; he also points out that the town does not own the barn. Cathy Curtis says that while the committee is certainly going to consider all locations, that the barn will remain part of our deliberations. Peter Lewis says he understands that but that thinking about location is not going to get us to an understanding of what our operations will be, and that we will always need to retrofit operations to adapt to the barn. Cathy Curtis says she understands that but because the program has been so successful over the years to the point of being commended by the state, that many of the features of that program will be considered as we come up with these plans; whether we go back to the barn or a new place, the barn is always going to be part of our consideration. Patrick McDonough believes that we need to think about the temporary situation we’re in now and that the site itself is a secondary thing; the barn is a building, not a mythical place where the whole movement of recycling began; if it can be made to work, that’s great, but that’s not really part of our consideration — he agrees with Peter Lewis that our consideration should be “what do we want for recycling”, and then once that’s established, we think about where that facility should be. He agrees that a survey will be a good idea, and that afterwards it will be up to us to analyze the costs and cost benefits.

Betsy Steen offers that we should also be thinking longterm about what the future of recycling might look like in America. She states that all towns are experiencing the same problems that we are, and believes that due to the widespread nature of the problem that there will also be broad-based efforts to come up with solutions; she poses that solutions could be happening already and that she would be happy to look into that. She doesn’t believe the country will just abandon recycling and that we could very well see a marked improvement over the next several years.

Lisa Wesel points out that whatever considerations we make about longterm plans, that the key to their success will be flexibility. She explains that with the volatile and always-changing markets, that we could come up with a plan tomorrow that could easily be moot by June, so any plan we make needs to be flexible in its details and include a facility that can quickly adapt to changing circumstances.

Tessa Kingsley asks that we stay on track in order to come up with a recommendation for a short-term location for the Select Board. Cathy Curtis agrees.

Eli Rubin offers staff support in drafting a survey, including providing citizens information about the different options. Cathy Curtis says that we will take him up on that in the near future. Eli Rubin asks the committee to not underestimate the time it can take to create a good survey.

Cathy Curtis asks if the committee is in agreement that the two sites that we want to consider for the temporary site are the current recycling barn parking lot and the old Public Works site. Tessa Kingsley asks that we consider the fire station. Cathy Curtis explains that it has been brought to the Select Board’s attention that when the fire station was originally approved at town meeting years ago, there was an alleged agreement that the town would not use the station for any other municipal activities, so the Select Board is honoring that agreement and has taken the fire station out of consideration as a temporary location; Peter Lewis concurs, but says that the committee can still look at the station if we choose to. Patrick McDonough wonders if anyone has asked Mrs. Williams (the original property owner who sold the land to be used as a fire station) how she feels about having the dumpsters there — not that it was part of the sale agreement but he would hate to go against her wishes.

Cathy Curtis confirms that the committee is in agreement that Mailley Waterfront is not a good location. She asks what member think about the old Public Works site: Patrick McDonough says that the traffic pattern would be easy there, and that there would be plenty of room for the dumpsters and a trailer. Tessa Kingsley says that it wouldn’t be in competition with another facility’s operations and that there would be the least amount of pressure to relocate out of it. Peter Lewis says that the old Public Works site offers many benefits, including that the town has worked up financials for it. Susan Drucker notes that there wasn’t an estimate yet on what supplying electricity to the site would cost, and that there were unknowns around both the required shoreline and DOT permits. Betsy Steen wonders if it would affect the plans for the waterfront park; Peter Lewis says that the park isn’t going to happen anytime soon so it wouldn’t be a conflict for at least a year or more. Cathy Curtis adds that there could be objections from nearby neighbors.

Susan Drucker asks Bryan Benson if he as a preference for the location; Bryan Benson answers that he does not have a preference and would just like a roof over his head, some heat, and the use of a bathroom. Susan Brown jokes that Bryan Benson is a pretty cheap date; Bryan Benson agrees.

Cathy Curtis asks for pros and cons in regard to the recycling barn parking lot site. Patrick McDonough says that it offers familiarity; Susan Brown adds that it won’t disrupt any neighbors; Betsy Steen reiterates that people are used to going there; Susan Drucker states that it wouldn’t need additional permitting, there’s electricity, the dumpsters are already there, and there’s room for Casella to go in and out. Susan Drucker asks if David Berry would be willing to renegotiate the lease based on just outside use (and wonders if she is allowed to ask that); David Berry answers that it’s premature to get into those details but that he would be happy to have the town use whatever part of the facility they want to use to get through this time; he notes that negotiations are going to take awhile but he hopes that it can work that out in a way that can be good for everybody. Susan Drucker points out another advantage to using the barn is that it could be up and running by November 1st as opposed to any other site; Bryan Benson says that it can take as long as 3-4 weeks to get an office trailer so that’s going to be an issue, and it’s possible that a trailer will require a permit; he will do his best to get that information as soon as possible. Patrick McDonough thinks there could be some traffic flow issues at the barn; Lisa Wesel believes that the circular configuration around the dumpsters ought to alleviate that problem; David Berry points out that residents have always managed to back out safely and that that shouldn’t change. Eli Rubin offers that for each of the six locations the town has modeled several different dumpster placements so we will be able to see that when the report is finished; Cathy Curtis asks when that report will be finished and Eli Rubin answers that they are working towards having it done for the meeting on October 19th but there will still be remaining questions due to the many pieces that are out of the town’s hands.

Cathy Curtis asks if the committee has a consensus on which site we feel is the best temporary location, or if members want to simply list the pros and cons of our two top choices (the recycling barn parking lot and the old Public Works site) to provide to the Select Board. Eli Rubin asks if we could give our opinions about the pros and cons for all the sites even if they aren’t going to be included in our recommendations. Cathy Curtis asks the committee to come up with two (or more) pros and cons for the sites that we haven’t already discussed. The list is as follows: **Mailley Waterfront Park**: Pros: bathroom facilities; electricity; Cons: shore-land permitting; interferes with current use; massive eyesore. **Current Public Works**: Pros: good parking and traffic flow; town is already there keeping area plowed; options for collecting additional materials; Cons: Interferes with current use; neighbors’ possible complaints (side question whether there has ever been rodent or odor issues at the barn; Bryan Benson says that there were rats at the east end of the building when food composting happened there one year not since, and that recycling has no odor problems). **Fire Station**: Pros: facilities for staff; near current barn; traffic flow is manageable; options for collecting additional materials; Cons: school bus drop off; potential problems if there was a fire call during recycling hours, especially if the Casella truck were picking up materials; concern for Mrs. Williams’ intent that the land would be used for a fire station only, a similar concern for the neighbors who understood that to be the case.

Cathy Curtis asks Bryan Benson to clarify if there is any storage at all at the recycling barn that could accommodate curbside pick-up collection/storage, or whether he has relooked at sorting the bags the same day; Bryan Benson answers that if they stay at the recycling barn, they will still not have access to the building for storage or sorting. Cathy Curtis asked about the small building that David Berry mentioned and whether that could be used for storage; Bryan Benson said that it is an old shed sitting on a trailer with no windows or doors and that it is not in good shape, that he would have to go back and look at it. Cathy Curtis asks if there have been any discussion about obtaining storage at any of the sites; Bryan Benson says that it has been discussed but that there hasn’t been a decision yet, that it goes back to permitting and what’s allowed or not allowed on specific parcels of land.

Cathy Curtis asks for consensus that the committee provide a written recommendation to the Select Board that would include a pros and cons list for the recycling barn and the old public works site; all agree.

**Next Meeting**: Monday, October 19th at 6:30 with the Select Board.

**Next Agenda: T**o be provided by the Select Board.

**Next Regular Meeting**: Wednesday, October 28th at 5:30.

**Next Agenda**: Discussing the future of the recycling program.

**Action Items**: Lisa Wesel will write up a draft survey for the 10/28 meeting. Betsy Steen would like to add suggestions. Eli Rubin will offer feedback once a survey direction is established.

Tessa Kingsley asks when we will begin discussing the viability of continuing curbside pick-up; Bryan Benson says that it will certainly be a topic at the 10/19 meeting with the Select Board.

Lisa Wesel asks for clarification as to whether either the recycling barn or the old public works site offer any options for collecting hazardous waste, electronics, paint and etc.; Bryan Benson answers that it will depend on the size of the trailer they get; he does want to continue collecting the smaller items that he can then transport to public works to store until they can be hauled away. Lisa Wesel feels strongly that we continue to aim at collecting those materials as they will most likely end up in the waste stream if we don’t; she is particularly worried about hazardous waste. Bryan Benson wonders about shoreline zoning and hazardous waste collection; he will talk with the town soon to find out what is or isn’t allowed. Lisa Wesel hopes that he could try and get an answer by Monday’s meeting so we have as much relevant information as possible.

Bryan Benson adds that he followed up on (1) the acquisition of a third Casella dumpster, and (2) the question as to whether Casella fees could be lowered with a better contamination rate: Casella has no available dumpsters at all right now (although that could change sometime in the future); and we are already paying the lowest baseline fee to Casella ($140/ton on average, based on a non-contracted rate); if our contamination gets worse, we would be penalized with an even higher rate, so it is obviously important that we aim at controlling contamination.

**Meeting is adjourned at 7:00pm.**