

SOLID WASTE COMMITTEE - April 8, 2026 Minutes

| <u>Attending</u> | <u>Not in Attendance</u> |
|---|--------------------------|
| Wendy Cunningham | |
| Paul Denis | |
| Pat McDonough | |
| Bryan Benson, Solid Waste and Recycling Director, Staff | |

PRIOR MINUTES

Minutes from September 24, 2025 were approved.

UPDATE FROM SOLID WASTE DIRECTOR

- April 18 is Bulky Waste day, including Freon. It is also Road Clean Up day where citizens clean up roads and the trash picked up is handled, without cost to volunteers, by the Solid Waste Department.
- Bryan has reached out (email) to DEP to follow up on the Town's Transfer Station license application. Paul indicated there was a 'Permit by Rule' policy where if the DEP does not respond to any application within their timeframe the permit is automatically approved. We expect response by end of May; **Paul will follow up with DEP to see if the 'Permit by Rule' policy would apply in this case.**
- Bryan is exploring using Eco Maine for our recycling as apposed to Casella. Eco Maine pricing is lower than Casella, however we would need to truck the material to their location. Bryan is also getting bids on trucking to perform an 'apples to apples' comparison.
- Yvette (Town Office) and Bryan met with Topsham to put together a dual community hazardous waste day, hopefully in August. This was only a preliminary meeting, more work would need to happen. We would split the cost with Topsham; the cost will be weighed in some manner as Topsham with its higher population will likely have more hazardous waste turned in by their citizens.
- Bryan has been given the charge by the Select Board to keep budget for FY27 either flat or lower than the current budget. There is no room to add costs covered by taxpayer funds.

DISCUSSION ON POSSIBLE SERVICES FOR TRANSFER STATION (WHEN LICENSE APPROVED)

NOTE: Although the license would allow us to do many things, based on budget constraints or administrative concerns we may not be able to do everything the license would permit.

Initially upon approval we will be able to accept bulky waste (e.g. mattresses, sofas) and old tires. These items require the citizens to pay a fee, as they do currently, but unlike current situation we can accept these items anytime the site has open hours.

Bryan is also working through process to accept composting items, including brush. Bowdoinham does own a chipper and currently we chip roadside clearings, this would expand to accept material from citizens. Currently the wood chips are used by the Town, e.g. on the new trails being developed. All current wood chips are 'spoken' for.

As we have more experience operating under the transfer station license we will continue evaluate if, and how, the Town could expand services that would be permitted. These evaluations need to consider both fiscal and administrative factors before being implemented.

TRASH TAG PRICING FOR FY27

NOTE: We have received emails from MWAC (Maine Waste to Energy, our trash destination who is under new management) that, in spite of our current contract, they are raising the tipping fee to \$110/ton effective 7/1/26 - current contract allows for only a 4% increase from prior year. Prior year price is \$93.93 meaning a cap of \$97.69. The new rate would be an increase \approx \$2,900 over contracted cap. They have also stated that future rates will be 120% of member cost. Members are the municipalities (e.g. Bowdoin) who own the facility. While we are currently working with them to address this issue MWAC's current position is that pricing will be finalized by 6/1/2026 for an effective date of 7/1/2026 giving only 30 days notice. As we are legally constrained to a process allowing for public meetings, SB approval, and adequate notice of rate change to citizens 30 days will not be sufficient to process any needed increases to synchronize with pricing increase. We discussed having the Town Manager connect with Town Attorney to discuss MWAC pricing not consistent with the current contract (possible Force Majeure, i.e. contractual clause freeing parties from liability when extraordinary, unforeseeable events, commonly referred to as an 'Act of God'.)

Prior to receipt of the information provided we calculated pricing based on contract where estimate came to \$3.17/tag which would be rounded to \$3.25/tag. New information would calculate to \approx \$3.27/tag. We will wait for figures to be final before we finalize calculation for the SB.

Current pricing of \$3.00/tag has been in effect since July 1, 2019, **Bryan to confirm.**

We also want to confirm Plummer's (trash hauler) cost. Typically Plummer raises pricing \$0.05/tag, however based on the current state of fuel costs (raising at more than CPI), **Bryan will contact Plummer to confirm cost increases.** Depending on that cost calculations may/will change.

We discussed whether or not we needed to issue an RFP for trash hauler this year.

1. We could dust off old RFP (from 2 years ago when we believed Plummer was retiring), however timing would not work for a 7/1/2026 effective date.
2. When we issued the RFP 2 years ago it was the first RFP issued in years, meaning there is not a policy stating RFPs must be done that frequently.
3. The only RFP response we had 2 years ago was from Plummer, i.e. there is not necessarily a market that would respond.

Given these factors we believe renewing with Plummer for FY27 is appropriate.

Administratively we'd recommended rounding trash tag pricing to the nearest \$0.25, however even that would cause administrative difficulties for both the Town Office and the SWD who sell the tags. Brunswick used to (and may still) bundle tags, e.g. 3 for \$10. We will recommend that Bowdoinham takes that approach also. Currently at the SWD only one person buys tickets one at a time, most citizens buy in batches, i.e. majority of citizens take a bundling approach currently. We will recommend this approach to the SB.

FEASIBILITY OF RECYCLING GLASS

We reviewed information we'd gathered to date as outlined in the DRAFT fact sheet. Based on that we discussed:

- Bryan had identified one Material Recovery Facility (MRF where recycled glass - clean and sorted - is converted into new product, i.e. new glass containers or fiberglass, etc.). The Sibilco facility located in Hopedale, MA, approximately 180 miles away from Bowdoinham. Data from a 2014 report shows that due to weight, trucking glass is not economically feasible if trucking is over 200 miles. Given the cost of fuel increases in the 12 years since this report we believe the location of this facility may be economically 'iffy' as well. **Bryan is currently looking into trucking waste for trash and during that process will also ask about trucking glass that distance.** The current information we have for trucking is \$400/load to truck to Portland. Other considerations for this facility include:
 - Need to sort glass at the Recycling facility, i.e. need to somewhat reconfigure,
 - Need to assure the glass being recycled would be 'clean' (we currently have issues with this for regular recycling, e.g. food waste in jars)
- We have information that all Casella uses glass recycled at their facility for only their own uses, capping land fills and in roads on their property. **Bryan will contact Casella (and Eco Maine who we are considering for future) to confirm that information.**

- Need to note that cullet (crushed glass), needs to be 3/8" - 1/2" to be used, we are unsure if our current glass crusher can crush the glass that finely. Will confirm that requirement and cite relevant reference in the next DRAFT fact sheet.
- The one citizen attending our meeting (David Berry) was able to confirm the current glass crusher was both a gift to Bowdoinham and had been used prior to 1999. It had been used to both crush glass and tin cans.
- David also advocated we accept glass as recycling again, when asked why the reason was to move the cost of disposing of glass from the current user paid trash tag process to be covered under tax dollars (i.e. be added to SWD budget). He believed we pay less for recycling than for trash, Bryan stated the opposite was the case. **Wendy will work with Bryan to do the comparison.**
- David stated he believed the Town should use crushed glass for fill as he has done so on his private property successfully. One of those uses was to be mixed in with cement; mixing with cement (or hot top) mitigates the low cohesion coefficient cullet has making that a safe use for cullet. For other uses, using cullet for fill on private property is acceptable per State requirement, while anecdotally this may have been successful at times engineering reports (from the International Society for Soil Mechanics and Geotechnical Engineering) indicate using cullet can be problematic from both a safety and structural potentially increasing Town's liability. Public Works has stated they will not use cullet on any private property work they do because of this. More information on the hazards of using cullet as fill are noted in the DRAFT fact sheet.
- **Paul will make inquires to both Sargent and Crooker Construction on any other potential market for cullet.**
- To determine possible costs to the town for recycling glass we would need to estimate what the volume might be. Based on experience David stated he believed the figure would be \approx 2 tons/month or 24 tons/annually. **Bryan will touch base with Topsham to get an understanding of what their numbers are, however they may not weigh their glass.** Topsham buries 'recycled' glass on public property, they do not use for any environmental purposes. Also need to consider many manufacturers are switching from glass to plastic (e.g. mayo and peanut butter jars) which may impact tonnage estimates.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Both Wendy and Pat's term on the committee are expiring on 6/30/2026. Both Wendy and Pat have volunteered to 'reup' on the committee. **Wendy and Pat need to send an email to Nicole stating this.** FYI, last year when Paul T. term limited out the Town asked if there were any other volunteers, no one came forward.

NEXT MEETING

Given the follow-up needed from this meeting we decided to meet in one month, on *May 6, 2026 at 6:30PM.* **Bryan will get on the Town's calendar.**