**Solid Waste Committee Minutes**

**December 9, 2020**

**Present:** Bryan Benson, Susan Brown, Tessa Kingsley, Cathy Curtis, Patrick McDonough, Lisa Wesel, Susan Drucker, Michael Smith, Eli Rubin, Elaine Diaz, Nora Bishop, David Berry, Seth Berry, Betsy Steen, Peter Lewis

**Amendments to the Agenda:** Susan Drucker requests that committee receive a copy of the recycling-based paperwork given to the Select Board by the town at the last Select Board meeting (12/8/20); she also asks that the committee receive all relevant paperwork in the future without having to ask.

**Approval of Minutes from November 25, 2020**: Lisa Wesel motions to approve; Susan Brown seconds; all in favor.

**Old Business:**

**- Review any information from Select Board Meeting as it pertains to the committee:** Cathy Curtis reports that talks have continued between the town and David Berry and that David Berry has sent a letter detailing the repairs and improvements that need to be completed to the recycling barn and his willingness to pay for the work upfront, with the understanding that if the town renews the lease in June, that the costs for the improvements (not repairs) would be bundled into the new agreement. David Berry adds that it became clear to him that unless he took the financial initiative, that there would be no movement forward any time soon.

Discussion about the committee’s desire to be cc’d on all recycling documents from all sources as they are generated, both for transparency and efficiency.

**- Update on when the temporary recycling location will open**: Bryan Benson reports that the site is ready to go for tomorrow morning (Thursday, Dec. 10) and that he expects a rush. He has two empty containers available for Thursday and that they are scheduled to be emptied on Friday to be ready again for Saturday’s open hours.

Cathy Curtis notes that committee members are doing a good job following FOAA social media requirements (e.g., only one committee member on any thread; sharing only concrete information) in regard to both the opening of the temporary facility and news updates.

**- Review of Online Recycling Survey:**

Eli Rubin reports that he has adjusted the draft to reflect committee members’ responses/feedback to the questions he had emailed previously.

Discussion and editing of survey.

Request from Elaine Diaz that the funds raised from the returnable bottle revenue be donated only to local charities, not to the town’s general fund; she notes that this was was the original intent of the collection. Discussion and agreement by committee members that eliminating the specifics of where the funds go (other than noting it be to a charity) better reflects the goal of the returnable bottles survey question.

**- Times Record Article:** Update by Lisa Wesel about her pitch to The Times Record to write an article about the function and history of the recycling barn and why it matters to the town, as well as the Solid Waste Committee’s current role in determining the recycling program’s future. The Times Record showed some interest in an article, but preferred that the article be written by one of their reporters, not a committee member. Lisa Wesel sent them a document that included talking points, barn history, and local contacts to orient a reporter to the story, but has yet to hear back. If The Times Record doesn’t pick it up, she will attempt to get it into other papers. Betsy Steen adds that the Historical Society’s upcoming e-newsletter will showcase the history of the barn, and that she has a folder dedicated to the barn’s history if anyone would like to use it as a resource.

Cathy Curtis comments that she found it very helpful to review the 2014 Comprehensive Plan’s references to recycling that Lisa Wesel gathered together (see Addendum 1). She asks Peter Lewis if the Comprehensive Plan is a guiding document for the Select Board; Peter Lewis says that it is. Cathy Curtis continues that with that in mind, the committee ought to use the Plan as a guide as well. She notes that the Plan concludes that buying or repairing the barn ought to be one of the town’s highest priorities. Discussion of Comprehensive Plan and how it might apply to the committee’s work.

**- Eco-Maine Update:** Tessa Kingsley confirms that there will be a presentation to the committee at our next meeting (January 6, 2021). She notes that the presentation will take 30 minutes with an additional 15 minutes reserved for questions.

Lisa Wesel asks what Bryan Benson’s concerns had been early on about EcoMaine; Bryan Benson answers that while EcoMaine’s numbers are similar to Casella’s numbers that we would have to rely on an additional company for transporting materials, and he is concerned that relying on an independent company for hauling could lead to scheduling problems. Lisa Wesel hopes that Bryan Benson will raise that issue at the EcoMaine presentation.

Peter Lewis suggests that the committee gather feedback from town’s currently using EcoMaine.

Seth Berry asks that we look into what EcoMaine does with the materials it collects; his concern is that some of the materials are simply incinerated. He notes in the chat box that “ EcoMaine brought a bill last year asking to be subsidized for the incineration of solid waste. Lots of talk about contamination.”) Cathy Curtis comments that that would be a question for all programs that we hope to research.

Tessa Kingsley reports that Casella is offering an overview of their program in a Zoom meeting on 12/11 and committee members are welcome to participate.

**- Review of financial information from July to November:** Cathy Curtis asks if Michael Smith could lead the financial discussion. Michael Smith appears to no longer be at the meeting. Cathy Curtis recommends that we re-visit financials at a future date.

**- Determine what information we want to gather on programs in other towns:** Cathy Curtis suggests that we might have a better idea what topics will be relevant once we’ve heard EcoMaine’s presentation and recommends that we table the discussion until after that meeting.

 **- Review Back-Planning timeframe to have proposal ready for Select Board by April 15th:** Cathy Curtisnotes that the town survey is in good shape and on schedule, and that there will be no meeting at the end of December.

Lisa Wesel asks Peter Lewis to clarify whether we need to get our report ready for the Finance Committee’s March deadline as opposed to the April 15th warrant deadline; Peter Lewis says that the Finance Committee deadline in the second or third week in March is the relevant deadline. Discussion of the new timeframe. Concern that the resulting report would be rushed and possibly inferior. Frustration over lack of proactive information from the town and the Select Board on our timeframe.

Cathy Curtis wonders what town resources the committee will have available to sort through financial considerations; Eli Rubin answers that that is what his department is there for, and if the committee can provide some concrete asks, that he can start gathering information. Cathy Curtis asks what the turn-around time would be to get answers back to us; Eli Rubin answers that until he knows what we want, that turn-around time would be hard to project; Cathy Curtis offers that the information we most likely would want would be what the costs to repair/improve the barn would be, and what a new facility would cost to build (once we have concluded the size of the needed facility). David Berry offers that it could take a long time to get numbers on a new facility as it would require employing an architect and possibly engineers to draft out plans before costs could be determined. Lisa Wesel points out that there would be financial considerations just to cover that planning step, considerations which would also need to be brought to town meeting. David Berry points out that the Select Board just voted to approve a $24,000 surveying/engineering project as a preliminary step for a new facility without consulting residents. He adds that Sagadahoc Recycling could have financials available by March.

Peter Lewis agrees that the process should not be rushed and that gathering the correct data will be important; he suggests that a special town meeting or targeting 2022’s town meeting would be a reasonable approach. He adds that amending an approved budget at a special town meeting can be problematic because it also affects tax payments.

Seth Berry comments (through the chat box) that warrants can include monetary placeholders; Peter Lewis says that that can work, but that the numbers would still need to be as accurate as possible since money can’t be added if there is a shortfall between the estimate and the actual costs. David Berry offers that financials for the barn would be easy enough to tabulate before March, but that numbers for a new facility would take much longer — so presumably the town would want to stay at the barn for the time it would take to act on a new facility. Cathy Curtis suggests that because these considerations won’t be solved tonight that we look at Eli Rubin’s final draft of the printed survey and move towards ending the meeting.

**- Review of Printed Survey:** Overview of details; some edits and space revisions made. Last minute addition to include a question about composting services. Bryan Benson reports that a local farm has been certified by the state and the Department of Agriculture to start a composting site in town and that they will take whatever materials the town wants to bring. (See Addendum 2)

**Follow-up Items:** Cathy Curtis will write an article to go with the survey in the town newsletter; Eli Rubin will create a link for the online survey. The link will go live the same day that the newsletter is delivered. Additional copies should be printed up and placed in as many town locations as possible.

**Public Comments:** No public comment.

 **Next Agenda:** EcoMaine presentation, and any new Select Board decisions/information.

**Next Meeting:** January 6th at 5:30.

**Adjournment:** Cathy Curtis adjourns the meeting at7:15 pm.

**Addendum 1:**

**2014 Comprehensive Plan References to the Town’s Recycling Program**

Page 4: Specific institutions, central to the appeal of community, are maintained and nurtured; for instance, Town Meeting, Bowdoinham Community School, the Library, the Recycling Barn and Program, the Waterfront Park, the Farmers Market, and the Town Hall.

Page 11: Promote, support and encourage recycling. (#11 on a list of 16 recommendations regarding public facilities and services.)

Page 131: *Is the solid waste management system meeting current needs? Is the community reducing the reliance on waste disposal and increasing recycling opportunities? Are improvements needed to meet future demand?*

Recycling has reduced the volume of waste in Bowdoinham. It is anticipated that the system’s current capacity will be able to handle projected growth during the ten-year planning period. Nevertheless, these improvements are recommended to improve efficiency and reduce costs: the Town should purchase the current Recycling Barn and renovate the building for better efficiency in handling recyclable materials.

Page 132: *Will other public facilities, such as town offices, libraries, and cemeteries accommodate projected growth?*

The Town’s public facilities, including the municipal building and fire station, recreation facilities, and the cemeteries generally have adequate capacity for the next ten-year period. Major capital needs identified include purchasing and renovating the Recycling Barn, and purchasing land and building a new garage and salt/sand storage facility for the Public Works Department. The most significant potential capital need is constructing a new Public Works Garage and salt/sand storage facility. See the Capital Investment Plan for a list of proposed projects.

Page 138: The capital investments identified below were assigned a priority based on the listed ratings. Logically, “A” investments would be implemented prior to “B” and so on. Lower priority items may be funded ahead of schedule if higher priority items have already been funded or are prohibitively expensive, or if other sources of revenue (such as donated funds) become available. In order to fund capital investment projects it is necessary to begin to identify funding sources and set aside funds in advance of the projected time of funding.

1. Immediate need. A capital investment rated in this category would typically remedy a danger to public health, safety and welfare.

Bowdoinham Capital Investment Plan Summary 2014-2024: Solid Waste & Recycling -- Repairs/Upgrades to Recycling Barn; possible purchase of land and building. Repairs: $40,000 Purchase: $150,000 - $200,000. Priority A.

**Addendum 2: Recycling Survey**

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