Town of Bowdoinham

Solid Waste Committee

August 5, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Attending: Cathy Curtis, Lisa Wesel, Tessa Kingsley, Patrick McDonough, Susan Drucker, Michael Smith, Susan Brown, David Berry, Jeremy Cluchey, Betsy Steen.

Meeting begins with a tour of the Recycling Barn, led by David Berry (Bryan Benson was originally slated to co-lead the tour but was unable to attend).

**Tour Notes:**

— After beginning with an overview of how mixed recyclables used to be sorted and shipped, discussion about how our current practice is contradictory at best: that we bring our mixed recyclables (e.g., plastic, metal, and glass) and mixed paper to the barn and sort them into the correct bins, only to have everything massed together for Casella (the exception being cardboard, newspapers/magazines, styrofoam, resident-sorted metal, and bulky waste). No clear answer as to why we continue to separate single-stream materials into bins if it is turned into zero-sort afterwards. Additional concern that with #2 clear plastic and metal not being sorted, we are giving away revenue.

— History of sorting process: barn staff used to sort everything until zero-sorting became the less-expensive option. When China stopped taking material, Casella had to raise their prices. Using zero-sorting is now most likely more expensive than sorting in-house.

— Explanation about what we do with styrofoam: it is very inexpensive for styrofoam to be picked up as baled trash, so the town offers the service as a courtesy to residents who would otherwise have to pay $2.50 a bag for material that weighs almost nothing but takes up so much space.

— Discussion about the boiler and heating needs of the barn: Originally, the Fire Marshal didn’t require a fire door to the boiler room, but now requires one if the boiler is going to continued to be used. David Berry believes that any improvements beyond the original lease agreement would be the town’s financial responsibility. David suggested that if the town didn’t want to continue to use the boiler, they could install smaller units in the main rooms and he would heat the 3rd apartment separately. The town has never had to pay for heat for the barn as the boiler runs on the scrap wood that residents drop off.

— Consideration of David Berry’s idea to use the seven windows on the parking lot side of the barn as drop-offs for each material (i.e., one window for newspaper, one for plastic, etc.). Staff would be inside monitoring and changing out filled bins while public would be outside. System could allow for up to ten cars at a time (current system is one car at a time). Unclear as to whether the Fire Marshal would approve this plan, although staff would still have two available exits even with the regular exits blocked by collection bins.

— Brief overviews of toxins, e-waste, batteries, waste oil, newspaper/magazines, and cardboard (cardboard, a money-maker, is baled; a truckload is 54 bales; bales have to be stored until collected; David Berry allows for cardboard storage in a section of the barn that the town doesn’t lease).

— Observation of cracked cement floor at the end of the building. Caldwell Engineering is currently in the process of evaluating the barn.

— Discussion about loading dock: if we choose to start accepting only the materials that earn money (and thereby eliminating the need for Casella), the loading dock could be opened to residents for large item drop-off (i.e., sofas, etc.) which would save the staff a great deal of work (and possible injury) hauling heavy items.

— Questions as to whether it will be viable to re-open the clothing and household exchange. Fire Marshal states that is is safe for staff to use staircase, so David Berry assumes that would be true for the public as well.

— Lisa Wesel suggests that some residents would be willing to pay extra to have materials recycled. David Berry believes knowing the financials of the overall operation would be a good first step and conceivably extra incentive. Question as to whether we should ask if a Casella representative could come to a meeting.

— Observation that 3rd floor fire doors need to be rehung in the right direction.

End of Tour.

**MEETING MINUTES:**

Cathy Curtis calls meeting to order.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

— Approval of Minutes from July 22nd meeting: Michael Smith motions; Susan Brown seconds; all in favor.

— Comments and questions about the tour: Patrick McDonough thanks David Berry for his years of guiding the program. Lisa Wesel asks for details on how glass crushing used to happen; David explains that a staff member wearing protective gear would crush glass in a barrel, crushed glass would then be stockpiled until sold. While there is no longer a market for glass, George Christopher has said he would be able to receive much of what we generate for fill, and Doug Tourtelotte has said he might be able to incorporate some of it as well. Question as to how small the pieces would need to be; material specialist (Eric Hamlin) from the DEP says 3/8ths of an inch, although if it is going to be buried, edges and size are less of a concern (see Addendum 1). Question as to why Bryan Benson might have expressed concern over crushing glass at the last meeting; decision that we can’t move forward without his input. Cathy Curtis says she will send questions to him.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

— Discussion of Michael Smith’s email about finances (see Addendum 2). He states that with all revenue going to the town’s General Fund, we don’t know what the recycling program is actually costing the town, other than it is an “exorbitant” amount. He would like to see financials for the past five years. Discussion as to where to get that information; start with the town manager who will most likely direct us to the town’s finance director. Michael Smith will follow-up.

— Discussion of Jeremy Cluchey’s email about finances and procedures (see Addendum 3). Decision to combine Jeremy’s questions with Michael Smith’s questions and Michael will obtain as much information as possible from the town.

— Discussion about what it would take to re-open the barn on Saturdays. Suggestion that we could create guidelines based on CDC recommendations. Lisa Wesel offers to set up a Google Doc where committee members can share/edit their ideas on re-opening, using David Berry’s correspondence with the EPA about current handling procedures (see Addendum 4) as a template. Lisa will also follow-up with the CDC about building size/number of people required ratios.

— Conversation about bottle return donations (as requested by Bryan Benson; see Addendum 5). Lack of clarity/history over why the funds ($8000 collected over 9 years) have never been distributed. David Berry said funds used to go to the school, and then later to the town’s heating aid fund. Jeremy Cluchey offered that there had been signage at the barn that stated donations would be given to the heating fund, but he doesn’t think that funds have been directed there. Lisa Wesel asks who decides where funds go. Jeremy believes that the barn staff didn’t want the onus of deciding who would get the funds, so that who decides remains open to discussion. Michael Smith will find out more when he gathers the other financials from the town.

— Discussion prompted by Tessa Kingsley about the committee being proactive about educating the public about recycling. Ideas included adding Tessa as an administrator to the town’s recycling facebook page where she could post tips and information, as well as cross-posting to other Bowdoinham sites (e.g., Bowdoinham Friends and Family, town FB site, town website); adding a regular column to the town newsletter; and creating kid-friendly videos. Cathy Curtis says that she will write a column for the next newsletter.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

No public comment.

**AGENDA fFOR NEXT MEETING:**

— Discussion of financial information gathered by Michael Smith.

— Continued conversation about getting the barn reopened on Saturdays, and possible ways to allow for more users on both Thursdays and Saturdays.

**NEXT MEETING:**

Wednesday, August 19th at 5:30. Meeting will be held outside at the barn parking lot, weather permitting. Please bring a chair and wear a mask. If weather isn’t good, Cathy Curtis will set up a Zoom meeting for the same time, amending the town calendar and notifying members by noon on the 19th.

**Meeting adjourned at 6:45.**

**Addendum 1**: Glass information:

Hi, David,   

This email is a follow up to our telephone conversation regarding the use of crushed, clean glass as fill. To recap the general context, you indicated that the Town of Bowdoinham was considering a move to sorted recycling (as opposed to single sort), but due to the low market value of glass you were asking about crushing for use as fill.

Crushed, clean glass is included in the Department’s definition of inert fill, and therefore may be used as fill without the need for a Department solid waste license (such as a beneficial use license). I’ll include that definition in its entirety here for reference:

**(from 06-096 C.M.R. 400.) RRR. Inert fill.** "Inert fill" means clean soil material, including soil from road ditching and sand from winter sand cleanup; rock; bricks; crushed clean glass or porcelain; aged, fully-hardened asphalt; and cured concrete; that are not mixed with other solid or liquid waste, and are not derived from an ore mining activity.

The key to the use of clean glass as fill is to ensure that contaminants such as metal or plastic caps, lids, and container contents are minimized to the extent possible; we do not expect removal of labels since this is really not practical. There is no required specification for crushing, but ideally the crushing process would be such that danger from sharp pieces would be minimized. In Aroostook County glass crushing for use as fill is common and I believe they try to crush to a 3/8” minus size but anything that decreases the cutting hazard would be acceptable. During the crushing process, noise, sharp pieces, and dust are the primary hazards, so some form of eye, ear, and respiratory protection for those near the crusher should be considered and applied as appropriate.

As with any fill, the final use may be subject to non-solid waste permitting. For example, expansion of a transfer station may require a license amendment, and filling near or in a water resource such as a stream or wetland may be subject to NRPA regulation. This is no different than filling with virgin materials such as soil, gravel, sand, etc.

Crushed glass can serve as a very useful fill or drainage layer material, so this can be a good way to divert significant tonnage from disposal to better purposes even though it is of limited cash value. Thanks for reaching out to discuss this. Please feel free to forward this email as you see fit, and to either contact me directly or direct questions to me.

Sincerely,

Eric P. Hamlin  
Environmental Specialist  
Division of Solid Materials Management  
Maine Department of Environmental Protection 207-822-6344  
www.maine.gov/dep

**Addendum 2**: Michael Guy Smith’s email:

It seems to me that the increase from $50 to $150 was a driver to recreating this committee along with about a $50k increase in the budget for 2020-21.

There seemed to be alot of confusion about the increase due to contamination.  The price was changed due to contamination throughout the region.  Since there was continued contamination they changed the pricing, there does not seem to be a clean option.

It would be interesting to see a longer period of information than 6 months.  Seeing 5 years of expenses AND revenue would allow us to see the changes that have happened over that time period to see trends.

As the chairwoman, would it be  better to have all requests for information, go thru you or a free for all?  I will provide a list monday of items (I would like to see) and some additional clarifications whichever route you think is best.

My thoughts were

A. Detailed expenses for the last 5 years plus the 2020-21 budget

B. Revenue from trash tags and detailed revenue from sale of trash.  How much, price, and date.

C.  With $235k in expenses and $85k in revenue (trash tags and sales), is it worth the $150k loss

**Addendum 3**: Jeremy Cluchey’s email:

What are we currently sending to Casella that could be a source of revenue for the town? (ie #2 plastic?)

·         What would it take to realize that revenue? (new sorting process? equipment?)

What are we currently sending to Casella that could be kept out to reduce our tonnage and disposal costs?

·         Are there alternative uses we could find for it? (ie glass as fill)

·         Could it be stored for a later date?

What are the obstacles to opening and operating the Recycle Barn safely on Saturdays?

What are the details/numbers that would help the Committee better understand how the program works and where efficiencies could be gained?

·         Information on shipments to Casella (date, weight, cost -- perhaps over the past year?)

·         Mixed paper shipments (tons? price per ton?)

·         Metal (tons? payment per ton?)

·         Corrugated cardboard (tons? payment per ton?)

·         Personnel costs

·         Trucking costs

**Addendum 4**: State Guidelines for waste collection:

From: **Hamlin, Eric P to David Berry**  
Date: Thu, Jul 30, 2020 at 3:06 PM  
Subject: COVID-19 information for transfer stations  
Thu, Jul 30, 2020  

This email is a follow up to our conversation today regarding transfer station operations and the COVID-19 pandemic. I sent out general information earlier this year, and the Department’s official guidance has not changed since then. I will include that with this email, but wanted to summarize the key points of our conversation in this email.

Information so far, including the most recent updates, appears to indicate that COVID-19 transmission is primarily by droplets and airborne particles projected during person-to-person interactions, and less so by contact with potentially-contaminated items. Therefore, I recommend measures that will address person-to- person transmission, such as masks, glass or plexiglass barriers, physical distancing, and conducting interactions in open spaces or outdoors rather than in indoor, or more enclosed spaces. You mentioned a possible switch to a system where facility customers will drop of bags of trash through building openings, and then staff inside will handle them. This would appear to be a very reasonable way to limit face to face interactions, and in my opinion is a sensible approach.

In terms of handling trash and recyclables – there has been some suggestion that letting materials sit for a few days may decrease the already-small chance of transmission by contact with trash and recycling. For example, the Clynk bottle and can redemption program has asked customers to wait at least three days before dropping bags of bottles and cans off after those bags are tied off. In theory, this would allow time for any viruses on the containers to die off before they are handled by Clynk employees. (they ask people to mark the bags with a bright piece of flagging or tape with the words “3 days OK” to indicate that people have let them sit for three days before dropoff).

Although this is probably not a bad idea, the Department does not have similar guidance. Typical household trash (MSW) often contains small amounts of hazardous waste, diapers, food containers, cat litter, used facial tissues, and other potentially pathogen-bearing or dangerous items. If employees continue to use



appropriate precautions like wearing gloves (nitrile rubber are good for chemical and pathogen protection, but leather will also to help protect against sharp items – they can double up if desired) and appropriate clothing while handling trash bags and then washing well before eating, smoking, etc., there should be very little potential for disease transmission – whether COVID, flu, colds, or other potential pathogens potentially in pet waste, rotting food, etc. In other words, the usual best handling practices should be fine for COVID as well.

Here is the COVID information I sent out earlier, at least to a lot of the facilities in Southern Maine I’ll also include the Governor’s emergency Executive Order regarding recycling – that is an attachment:

1. **Waste handling safety:** So far, we are not aware that handling of waste that may potentially be contaminated with COVID-19 requires anything other than typical best practices. Similarly, there is no information to suggest any increased danger from normal operations such as compactor cycling. We have obtained the following information from OSHA on waste handling:

“This section provides guidance for solid waste and wastewater management workers and employers. This guidance supplements the general, interim guidance for U.S. workers and employers of workers with potential occupational exposures to COVID-19, above.

Generally, management of waste that is suspected or known to contain or be contaminated with COVID-19 does not require special precautions beyond those already used to protect workers from the hazards they encounter during their routine job tasks in solid waste and wastewater management.

Some state, local, tribal and/or territorial health or environmental department(s) may have different or additional requirements for managing solid waste and wastewater.

*Municipal Waste*

Workers and employers should manage municipal (e.g., household, business) solid waste with potential or known COVID-19 contamination like any other non-contaminated municipal waste.

Use typical engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and PPE, such as puncture-resistant gloves and face and eye protection, to prevent worker exposure to the waste streams (or types of wastes), including any contaminants in the materials, they manage. Such measures can help protect workers from sharps and other items that can cause injuries or exposures to infectious materials.



***Recycling***

As with municipal waste, employers and workers in the recycling industry should continue to use typical engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and PPE, such as puncture-resistant gloves and face and eye protection, to prevent worker exposure to recyclable materials they manage, including any contaminants in the materials.”

2. **Facility operations and services:** Some facilities are thinking about or have already begun scaling back operations. For example, I have been asked if it is OK to temporarily suspend collection of construction and demolition debris to help decrease traffic and to prepare for potential decrease in staffing. This is acceptable provided that critical services like collection of putrescible waste such as MSW or segregated organics are maintained. I also recommend that collection of potentially problematic waste streams like universal waste be continued if possible to discourage illegal dumping or placing of such items in MSW. Another facility in this area has completely shut down their transfer station, but that city has curbside pickup of MSW, recycling, and organics, so they are maintaining the most critical services.

In any case, If any changes are proposed municipalities should do everything they can to inform the public about any changes to operations, and facility operators should contact DEP solid materials staff so that we can keep track and help troubleshoot.

3. **Continuity of operations:** Facilities are taking different approaches to ensure operational continuity. For example, one town has paired one of the two regular transfer station staff with someone from public works, and these new teams work alternate weeks in the hopes that both full time staff people will not be out sick at the same time. Obviously that may not be possible everywhere, but this would be a good time to ensure that any potential backup personnel are familiar with facility operations and the operations manual.

I hope that helps. Please let me know if you have any more questions. Sincerely,

Eric P. Hamlin  
Environmental Specialist  
Division of Solid Materials Management  
Maine Department of Environmental Protection 207-822-6344  
www.maine.gov/dep

**Addendum 5**: Bottle Return Donations information from Bryan Benson:

“As I am sure you know, we have an area where residents can drop off their deposit bottles and cans. We then have an arrangement with D&D Redemption on Post Road who comes and picks them up and writes us a check for them. I then take that check and turn it in to the town for deposit in the town’s general fund. That bottle account now has in excess of 8K dollars, it took nearly 9 years to collect that amount. The Select Board has asked me to share this info with you in the event that the bottle collection comes up in your discussions. FYI, in the past I have polled the barn patrons and most were under the impression the money was being used to offset costs to operate the program.”