**Solid Waste Committee**

**January 13, 2021 Minutes**

**Present:** Cathy Curtis, Lisa Wesel, Patrick McDonough, Michael Smith, Susan Drucker, Bryan Benson, Betsy Steen, “KKW WD” (Steve Cox), Martha Cushing, David Berry, Jacinta Wilkins-Blodgett, Paul Denis.

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

**Amendments to the Agenda:** No amendments to the agenda.

**Approval of the January 6, 2021 Minutes:**

Susan Drucker (secretary) notes that she would like to attach the PDF slide file from Ecomaine but does not have a copy; agreement that the PDF will be added when a copy is received.

Lisa Wesel asks for clarity about some of the tasks that Peter Lewis charged the Committee with as detailed in the 1/6 Minutes (e.g., to provide financials for both the barn and a new facility, including architect and contractor estimations and permitting research) and whether they are different from what the Select Board determined at their meeting on 1/12 (e.g., the town will work on all facility financials and permitting); consensus from those who watched the 1/12 Select Board meeting that the two charges were different.

Lisa Wesel moves to approve the Minutes; Patrick McDonough seconds; all approve.

**Old Business:**

**Review any information from Select Board Meeting as it pertains to the Committee:**

Cathy Curtis updates the Committee on Nicole Briand and David Engler’s clarification about the Committee’s tasks: she summarizes that our charge is to research what services the town wants and what the costs of those services would be; location costs and permitting considerations are not part of the Committee’s tasks, nor is the barn lease (see Addendum 1). Michael Smith further clarifies that the Committee has been asked to provide information about all recycling services, including alternatives for processing, by researching associated costs, equipment needs and costs, space requirements, and labor costs. Paul Denis adds (through the chat box) that this can be summed up under “Operational costs and alternatives.”

Bryan Benson informs the Committee that there will be additional recycling hours added to the current schedule: services will be available at the Public Works on Tuesdays from 12 - 6pm beginning on January 19th.

Cathy Curtis notes that Tessa Kingsley has resigned from the Committee, citing that the financial tasks laid out for the Committee at the January 6th meeting were “outside her wheelhouse”. Cathy Curtis has sent an email asking her to reconsider as those tasks were clarified differently by the Select Board on January 12th, but she has not heard back. Cathy Curtis has asked Nicole Briand to make sure that a 6 person committee still falls within the required limits.

**Recycling Survey**: Eli Rubin has let Cathy Curtis know that Madeline Winston has been adding paper survey data to the online tallies, and that they will be able to provide a spreadsheet with all gathered data at the end of the survey period. She adds that he has also turned off the notification that asks online survey takers if they want to re-take the survey — residents can still take multiple surveys, but they would have to log-in separately each time to do so; agreement that ballot stuffing would be an unlikely scenario. LIsa Wesel cautioned that the survey will be informative but is not in any way scientific because there is the possibility that people can fill it out more than once. The current number of completed online surveys is 232. Betsy Steen asks how many households there are in town; Bryan Benson says that there are 1200 households and approximately 3000 citizens. Cathy Curtis suggests that we aim at a Facebook push to remind citizens about the survey as the deadline nears. Betsy Steen adds that she will include a reminder about the survey in the next Historical Society Newsletter. Lisa Wesel wonders what we will do without Tessa Kingsley to create graphics and a Facebook presence; Bryan Benson responds that he is working on keeping her involved.

**Ecomaine:** Patrick McDonough reminds the Committee that Bryan Benson has concerns about Bowdoinham’s contamination percentages and how they fall at the high end of Ecomaine’s penalty fees. He spoke with his contacts in Vinalhaven and North Haven about their Ecomaine costs, but said that with their “astronomical” transportation costs of having to include the costs of using a ferry, it was an “apples and oranges” comparison. Lisa Wesel notes that Lissa Bitterman of Ecomaine recounts “a lot of success” with contamination rates through their educational outreach to towns, and she would like to follow up on how towns have improved their numbers.

Cathy Curtis asks if there are any other options for recycling services in the state: Bryan Benson says that there is Waste Management, but they use Ecomaine’s services, and there is Maine Resource Recovery Association in Newport, Maine, a brokerage service that requires a $150 annual membership fee.

Susan Drucker asks how much tonnage the town collects in a typical week (in regard to Ecomaine’s $16 annual return on each ton collected); Bryan Benson says that it is about 3 tons a week. Patrick McDonough asks if we are maximizing our use of Casella — for instance, would they take baled materials? Bryan Benson answers that they would, but the costs for hauling right now doesn’t make it worthwhile, at 2.5 - 3 miles per gallon and 90 miles round trip, when cardboard is only paying $15/ton.

Lisa Wesel asks if it would be possible to get numbers for the amounts of individual materials that the town generated before single stream collection; Bryan Benson says that the DEP would have those reports, and maybe the town would still have them. Lisa Wesel asks when Bowdoinham switched to single-stream; Bryan Benson answers that when he started working for the program 13 years ago that there was modified single stream then (cardboard, newspaper, and magazines were the exceptions). David Berry adds that mixed paper was still being baled when he retired. He adds that he has materials numbers from 1992/93 and may have other years as well. Lisa Wesel asks if it is reasonable to think that we could sort and bale some materials ourselves since Ecomaine takes baled material and shares a percentage of the subsequent sale; David Berry says that it would be possible but that there has to be enough baled material to fill a tractor trailer or transportation costs aren’t worthwhile.

Cathy Curtis asks if the town gets any information about our contamination rates from Casella (in reference to Ecomaine providing a monthly breakdown for member towns); Bryan Benson says that they only do spot checks.

Susan Drucker asks how Bryan Benson gets current market prices on recycled materials; Bryan Benson answers that he has to call brokers.

Patrick McDonough asks if there would be a way that we could have residents sort into box trailers; David Berry answers that we would need a roll-off truck to make that work; he notes that West Gardiner has their own roll-off truck and that their town program would be a good one to look at.

**Determine what information we need to gather:**

Michael Smith states that the Committee needs to look at everything (i.e., equipment, bale sizes, storage requirements, etc.) and that we don’t need to wait for the survey to be completed before we begin that research.

Committee members’ research topics: Michael Smith: glass; Patrick McDonough: cardboard; Susan Drucker: mixed paper, newspaper, and magazines; Cathy Curtis: plastics; Lisa Wesel: hazardous waste; Betsy Steen offers to research tin cans. (Susan Brown — not at the meeting due to internet problems — emails the committee on 1/14 that she will research composting.) Lisa Wesel will also be researching Ecomaine and their contamination outreach/education program.

Michael Smith states that there could be advantages to collecting non-single-stream materials (i.e., tires, paint cans, light bulbs) on a less regular schedule (i.e., not every time the facility is open). Bryan Benson says that he would still have to store the materials until the containers are full. Michael Smith asks which materials have other options for recycling drop-offs; Bryan Benson answers that paint cans can be brought to Sherwin Williams, fluorescent lightbulbs can be taken to most Big Box stores (he notes that there is a likelihood that LED lights will be designated hazardous waste sometime in the future). Michael Smith suggests that if there are other options available to citizens for certain materials that the town stop collecting those materials in order to gain additional storage space. Bryan Benson notes that paint and lightbulb collection doesn’t cost the town anything.

Michael Smith asks if Bryan Benson could provide the Committee with the amount of recycling that went out of the barn from July 2018 - June 2019 (aiming for pre-covid numbers). Bryan Benson said that it would take weeks, but that he could do it. Cathy Curtis said it would be good information to know in order to be able to make estimates in our materials research. David Berry notes that he has data from “way back” and could get some of it to us. Bryan Benson adds that some information could be available from the state if Michael Smith wanted to call.

Paul Denis (via the chat box) notes that we need to be sure we’re using the same metrics, including “square foot costs, triple net expenses for storage - $20/hr of labor to sort/bale, fork truck amortization costs to handle bales, glass storage, etc.” Lisa Wesel notes that we could do a materials spreadsheet similar to the draft she put together to compare Casella and Ecomaine. Cathy Curtis suggests that once we begin our individual research that the shared criteria will become clearer. Lisa Wesel comments that it might be faster to begin with shared criteria.

Lisa Wesel points out that it makes sense to look at processing costs but not what materials sell for as prices are constantly changing. She adds that at one point recycling made money but not any longer, and the question will be how much residents are willing to pay. She concludes that our job needs to be looking at alternative ways we can dispose of materials.

“KKW WD” (Steve Cox) comments (via the chat box) “The cost should be relative to the market if they are a non-profit.”

David Berry states that he has outdated but still useful studies on how long bales took to gather and the cost of labor involved (including social security, unemployment, etc.).

**Timeframe:** Cathy Curtis hopes that the Committee can get research to the Select Board by the end of March.

**Follow-Up Items**: Cathy Curtis will update our task according to the latest clarification from the Select Board; Committee members will pursue their materials research; Cathy Curtis will get survey updates from Eli Rubin; Cathy Curtis will post a survey reminder on Bowdoinham Friends and Family on Facebook before the next meeting (January 27); Cathy Curtis will write a draft of the Committee’s work for the annual Town Report (due February 12th).

Bryan Benson wants the Committee to know that if members are looking to him for answers for some of their materials research, to please be patient; he is in the middle of the town’s budget process, the annual report for the state, and the annual town report; he will get back to us, but it will most likely be slowly. He recommends asking Eli Rubin any financial questions. Betsy Steen asks whether David Berry would be available to answer questions; David Berry says he can be.

**Public Comments:** No public comment.

**Next Agenda:** See Follow-Up Items above.

**Next Meeting:** Wednesday, January 27th at 5:30.

**Adjournment:** Cathy Curtis adjourns the meeting at7:00 pm.

**Addendum 1:** Tasks of Solid Waste Committee (as clarified by interim Town Manager and Select Board Chair on 1/12/21):

“Vision for Future of Solid Waste & Recycling Programs.

a.         What services does the Town want?

b.         What is needed to offer these services?

c.         How can these services be offered?

d.         What is the cost to offer these services?

For example, if the Town wants to recycle cardboard, what are our options.  1 - Single stream – what is needed for this and what is the estimate cost of this? 2 – Bale & Sell – what is needed for this (equipment, storage space) and what is the estimate cost of this?  If it is determined that the Town wants to bale & sell cardboard, then we will need to add those programing needs into our program and building design(s).  The Committee should be developing lists of desired services, along what is needed to offer that service (space, equipment, staff time, etc) and estimated costs to do so.

These tasks do not involve locating the operations or costs of building/building improvements.”