**Solid Waste Committee**

**January 27, 2021 Minutes**

**Present:** Cathy Curtis, Lisa Wesel, Patrick McDonough, Susan Drucker, Susan Brown, Michael Smith, Bryan Benson, David Berry, Paul Denis, Judy Gray, Stephen Savoie.

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

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

**Approval of January 13, 2021 Minutes:** Lisa Wesel motions to approve; Susan Drucker seconds; all approve.

**Old Business:**

**Review information from the January 26th Select Board meeting as it pertains to the Solid Waste Committee:** Cathy Curtis asks David Berry to summarize Sagadahoc Recycling’s 10 week pilot program proposal (See Addendum 1). David Berry explains that he wants to look at residents’ willingness to source-separate certain recyclable materials (glass, steel and aluminum cans, #2 clear plastic, #2 colored plastic, newspaper, and magazines) and that he will open the recycling barn to receive those materials for ten weeks beginning on April 3rd. He notes that the labor costs involved in separating materials is one of the most expensive parts of getting materials into the commodities market, and if residents could pre-sort, it would eliminate that cost. He will also be weighing the collected materials, which will provide the town program with useful data moving forward. He adds that taking the weight of these materials out of the town’s single-sort program will help save the town transportation costs and tipping fees. He is also interested in seeing how well the traffic-flow plan that he proposed for the barn last summer will work. Cathy Curtis asks how he will be getting the word out to residents; David Berry says that he will be looking into that, including finding a communications director; he will aim at getting the word out 4-6 weeks before the program begins. He is hoping to get volunteers from both Bowdoin College and Bowdoinham residents. The program will be open on Saturdays from 8am - 4pm.

Cathy Curtis suggests that while the Committee’s report to the Select Board should hopefully be complete before the end of March, that data from the pilot program could be attached as a future addendum.

Lisa Wesel asks how money would be saved if the materials have to be gotten rid of eventually, and wonders where he will be taking the materials once the program is done; David Berry says that if the town comes back to the barn, the town can bale it up and sell it, but that he hasn’t thought about what he would do with it if the town doesn’t come back to the barn. Lisa Wesel asks if Casella would buy source-sorted materials; David Berry believes they would. Cathy Curtis points out that disposal costs need to be part of the overall equation; David Berry notes that avoided costs as well as revenue (for some materials — specifically #2 clear plastic) are also relevant.

**Survey Update:** Cathy Curtis has not received an updated survey count but will send an email to Committee members once she does. (Update note: count as of January 28th = 398 surveys). After the survey deadline on the 31st, Eli Rubin will tally the results in time for the Committee’s next meeting on February 10th. Cathy Curtis posted on the Bowdoinham Friends and Family’s Facebook page to remind residents that the deadline for the survey was coming up.

**Information about Materials:** Discussion of categories for Materials spreadsheet: Lisa Wesel suggests Storage Space; Costs (labor and/or disposal); How long materials needs to be stored; Amount of material collected annually.

 - Glass: Michael Smith reached out to the town and the manufacturer of the glass crushing machine in order to locate a manual for the machine but has yet to come up with one. The machine weighs 500 lbs. and while casters are available, he is not sure if our machine has casters already or not; operating the machine requires three-phased power; it can crush a ton of glass an hour. He calculates that a ton of crushed glass would fill about three 55 gallon drums. He adds that it is not a sellable commodity, but he has contacted Bootleggers to see what they do with their crushed glass; David Berry suggests also asking Maine Recycling in Lisbon. Susan Brown notes that there has been interest expressed by a town resident about taking the crushed glass as fill; Michael Smith agrees that there would certainly be ways to move the material even if we couldn’t sell it. David Berry points out it would need to be stockpiled — that there would be some expense involved. Bryan Benson notes that both Casella and Ecomaine have used as much crushed glass as they can to cover their landfills and that they are both stockpiling the excess.

 - Cardboard: Patrick McDonough states that up until now the recycling program has always baled cardboard even when most other materials were single-streamed. Cardboard costs $54/ton to process, which would be the break-even point if it were going to be sold; this does not include the savings gained by taking it out of the Silver Bullet collection fees. When haulers used to come to pick up bales from us, there was a 40,000 lbs. load minimum (54-56 bales) — anything less and we were charged a penalty fee. It took about three months to produce that many bales. A bale weighs 750 - 800 pounds. The price is market-driven and the price can fluctuate from virtually nothing to over $100. He summarizes that it would be easy enough to pick it out of the waste stream and bale it as we did before once we are able to use the baler again. David Berry comments that Nine Dragons has bought a mill in Rumford that will be using both mixed paper and cardboard, which will help the market. David Berry and Bryan Benson estimate that the storage space required to store the bales would be 12’ x 24’ in addition to “13 verticals”. Patrick McDonough wonders whether a company would be willing to leave us a box trailer to hold materials until there was enough to be picked up.

 - Mixed Paper: Susan Drucker thanks David Berry for helping with the numbers, and reports (with a correction from David Berry) that it takes six hours to bale a ton of mixed paper (a ton is approximately two bales); at $20/hr for labor, a ton of mixed paper would cost $120 to process; it takes about six months to store enough mixed paper to fill a tractor trailer; it takes 300 square feet of floor space to hold the materials until pick-up, and the program collects about 33 tons of mixed paper a year.

 - Newspaper: Susan Drucker reports that newspaper is collected in gaylords/watermelon boxes; a gaylord of newspapers weighs about 700 pounds, and it takes up to a year to accumulate enough newspaper for a tractor trailer pick-up. Bryan Benson updates the information, noting that the program is taking in less and less newspaper every year due to the digital age; he says that it can sometimes take up to a month to fill one gaylord. With that correction, a re-estimation that it could take as long as two and a half years to fill a truck. Storage requirements would be 152 square feet of floor space. Based on one gaylord a month, the program generates 4.2 tons of newspaper a year.

 - Magazines: Based on Bryan Benson’s information, Susan Drucker recalculates that it would also take two and a half years to accumulate a full truckload of magazines. The storage space needed would be 152 square feet; a gaylord of magazines weighs 600 pounds; the program generates 3.6 tons of magazines a year.

 Bryan Benson also notes that he can ship a mixed load of boxed newspapers and boxed magazines in one truck. The materials are taken to Scarborough where they dump the separate boxes and bale them there.

 - Plastics: Cathy Curtis will present information on plastics at the next meeting.

 - Compost: Susan Brown will be speaking with Brian Hobart, David Berry, and Bryan Benson and will have information for our next meeting.

 - Metal Cans: Betsy Steen reports that she has found two facilities — one in Berwick and one in Newport — that take cans. The Berwick facility doesn’t come to Bowdoinham for pick-up, but would be willing to take delivered materials (a three hour round-trip). The Newport facility is run by Victor Horton and will be providing her with a price list; Newport is also a three hour round trip. Bryan Benson notes that Casella also takes cans and wonders where the idea came from that they don’t. Betsy Steen states that we pay to have the cans taken by Casella, whereas Vic Horton would pay us for them. Betsy Steen adds that the town-owned glass crushing machine also crushes cans and has the capacity to crush 10,000 cans an hour; she wonders how many cans the program has historically taken in. David Berry says that his pilot program will be able to determine an estimate for that, but that somebody ought to try and get the state reports that list annual tonnages. Lisa Wesel wonders if old reports are going to reflect current amounts. David Berry asks Bryan Benson if the state still requires annual breakdowns of materials generated; Bryan Benson answers that with single stream, those numbers aren’t tallied anymore, that the annual report is entirely different than how it was in the past. David Berry still wonders if the annual total tonnage of all recycled materials could be compared from year to year, although he points out that population size has also grown every year. Betsy Steen finishes by reporting that if cans were delivered to Newport or Berwick, labels wouldn’t need to be removed but cans would need to be lightly washed. She has ideas for education and incentives.

Bryan Benson states that he has also recently spoken with Victor Horton and that the current requirements for #2 plastic is to be clean and dry and without caps.

Susan Drucker asks if the Committee could see what the state report looks like, just for our education, and asks if Bryan Benson could take a screen shot of the form; Bryan Benson says that he can do that when he fills out the report, probably in March.

**Review of Michael Smith’s Procedural Recommendations:**

 - Request for a list of Assets that the town owns for Recycling: Bryan Benson states that the town doesn’t have a formal inventory, but that he has been taking notes and that he took pictures as equipment was moved out of the barn over to the Public Works building. Susan Drucker asks if the truck is only for recycling or if it’s shared with Public Works; Bryan Benson answers that it is just for recycling, and notes that it gets two miles a gallon; David Berry suggests the wooden truck bed should be covered for the winter.

 - Request for two timeframes of recycling history, one covering a recycling “boom” and one from the last full pre-covid time period (e.g. FY July 2018 - June 30 2019): Bryan Benson says that a history of material quantities isn’t available, other than a history of billing and the weights listed there, which is will aim to gather together.

 - Request to overview labor costs associated with each material once the Committee has gathered and reviewed information on each material.

 - Cathy Curtis notes that two of the recommendations (gathering information about materials; spreadsheet development) are being addressed.

 - Determine what information we want to gather from other towns: Cathy Curtis asks whether the Committee believes pursuing information about other towns’ programs is a useful effort. Bryan Benson responds that seeing how other towns are doing things would be an excellent resource. Lisa Wesel notes that Lissa Bitterman from Ecomaine provided a list of towns that would be useful for us to look into; Cathy Curtis asks if all the listed towns have contracts with Ecomaine, Lisa Wesel believes they do: Cathy Curtis notes that we should be sure to add others that don’t work with Ecomaine in order to provide comparisons. Discussion about meeting with Eddie, the director of the Topsham Transfer Station, who has said he would be more than happy to tell us the things he wishes he had done when they set up their program; discussion about setting up a time that the Committee could meet with him.

 Cathy Curtis notes that Bryan Benson has set up presentation with Casella for our next meeting (February 10th). Lisa Wesel asks if Cathy Curtis could send the survey results to Committee members prior to February 10th so there would be more time at the meeting for Casella and to review the survey findings; Cathy Curtis will ask Eli Rubin if that would be possible; Susan Brown and Lisa Wesel will email their materials information (composting, hazardous waste) to the Committee beforehand as well; Cathy Curtis notes that due to FOAA regulations we would still need to discuss the information at the meeting.

 Susan Drucker asks Bryan Benson and David Berry for any suggestions about other towns that might have interesting recycling programs for the Committee to look into; discussion about whether we should investigate a cooperative program with the town of Bowdoin; David Berry notes that historically, cooperative programs don’t last long; Lisa Wesel notes that a cooperative venture with Bowdoin would negate the materials data we’ve been gathering. Decision to have Committee members research a town or two each during the month of February. David Berry recommends looking into West Gardiner and Dresden/Lincoln County.

**New Business**

**Review of David Berry’s Source-separated pilot program:**  See “Review of January 26th Select Board meeting as it Pertains to the Solid Waste Committee” above.

**Determine what other information ought to be gathered:** Cathy Curtis asks if there are any other areas the Committee members think we should be gathering information about at this point; there were no additional suggestions.

**Ecomaine Information:** Lisa Wesel updates the Committee on her conversation with Lissa Bitterman. She reports that we won’t be able to sell source-separated baled materials to Eccomaine as our bales aren’t the same as their bales, nor are they packaged the way Ecomaine requires.

Lisa Wesel was also told that towns can readily reduce contamination levels if facility staff supervise residents’ drop-offs. As far as curbside pick-up contamination, Lissa Bitterman suggested a bin collection system where materials are easily viewable to the truck driver who becomes part of the supervision process, grading each bin with red, yellow, or green stickers based on conformity. Ecomaine provides 100 free bins, but the town (or residents) would need to buy the rest at $7 each. There are also all-weather stickers that could go on any type of trash cans/receptacles rather than bins. Lisa Wesel notes that recycled materials contained in plastic bags are never accepted by Ecomaine. Ecomaine’s education outreach covers all participants in the system, from truck drivers to staff to residents; the education piece has to take place before the program begins and takes about a month to complete. Lisa Wesel notes that there can be problems with residents becoming angry about being told they can’t do things certain ways, especially if their materials aren’t being accepted as is. Lissa Bitterman suggested that the town buy a compactor to cut down on transportation costs. She notes that one Ecomaine contracted town publishes a monthly tally of extra costs that occur when residents (not named) fail to keep contamination rates low.

**Additional Comments:**

Michael Smith notes that trash tag purchases don’t cover the costs of pick-up — he calculates that trash pick-up actually costs $3.10 a bag, so the town ends up paying 60 cents on each bag. He believes we should let the Select Board know. Cathy Curtis asks Bryan Benson if the Select Board does know; Bryan Benson says if they don’t, they should; he adds that he reluctantly believes that the cost of the tags needs to go up and that he has spoken with Nicole Briand about the problem. Cathy Curtis asks if she should be addressing the problem with the Select Board; Bryan Benson answers that Nicole Briand will do it. Lisa Wesel notes that increasing the price of a trash tag just when we can’t recycle as much is unfortunate timing, and she hopes that the town can wait to raise the price of tickets until we get recycling issues resolved; she notes that the extra weight of glass in trash compounds to the problem. Bryan Benson points out that a price increase would need to be approved at town meeting, so that would beed to be the timeframe. Bryan Benson adds that the upcoming renewed contract with Richard Plummer will also include a 3% price increase.

Cathy Curtis states that she will have a draft report about the Committee’s work ready for members to review by the next meeting and then needs to submit it to the town.

**Public Comments:**

Betsy Steen received an email from a member of the Historical Society who expressed her concern that she and her husband were told by recycling staff that they needed to push their materials further into the “overfilled” dumpster’s “high opening” with a rake, and that material was falling out onto her husband as he did so; the writer asserted that there was no offer of help from the attending staff, and that if the writer’s husband had not been with her, she would not have been able to do the work necessary to get materials into the dumpster. The writer wondered if the staff didn’t help because of social distancing concerns. Bryan Benson confirms that there had been a complaint filed with the town that staff were too close to the dumpster when residents were dropping off materials; since then, they have been strict about maintaining distance; he goes on to make clear that while staff members use a rake to push items further into the dumpster, that residents do not; he will look into the complaint. He adds that he wishes the resident had contacted him, not Betsy, so they could have discussed the incident. Further discussion about the height and size of the dumpster doors, the lack of clearance along one side of the dumpster, keeping ergonomics and safety as a priority, and ADA accommodations.

Cathy Curtis mentions that there was a video made by John Deans about current recycling rules that was very well done; she believes it was posted on Bowdoinham Friends and Family.

Bryan Benson notes that there will be a Bulky Waste Collection Day on April 17th.

**Next Agenda:** Presentation by Casella; review of survey results; updates on materials research.

**Next Meeting:** Wednesday, February 10th at 5:30.

**Meeting adjourned at 7:25.**

**Addendum 1**: David Berry’s Source-Separated Pilot Program:

“Sagadahoc Recycling Company (SRC) plans to begin, on April 3rd, a 10 week pilot program at the Bowdoinham Recycling Barn to receive, measure, and record the weights of various categories in the Town’s recycling waste stream, including newspaper, magazines, #2 HDPE plastic (both colored and natural), steel and aluminum cans, and glass. SRC will be open on Saturdays from 8 am to 4 pm, and will also receive waste wood and deposit containers.

The source-separated materials will be deposited by residents through designated windows along the north side of the building into pallet boxes on the inside, where they will be weighed, tallied and placed in storage for future processing if necessary before they are sold. Glass will be crushed on site and stored for inert fill. By collecting only those materials that can be sold at a price higher than the cost of processing them, and eliminating the high costs of trucking and tip fees at a single-stream facility, substantial savings can be realized.

The main objective of this pilot program will be to introduce residents to source-separation, certainly the least expensive method of handling recyclable materials. Sorting, either in-house (Bowdoinham, 1989–2007) or outsourced (Casella, 2007–present) is a large part of the cost of getting these materials out to the market.

Another important focus will be on information gathering: a weekly assessment of the weights of the various materials, the time required to receive, weigh and store them, and the number of residents participating.

The Town will benefit financially from this pilot project in that none of these recyclable materials will enter the Town’s current single-stream program, saving the Town from paying the trucking and tip fee costs for them. The program will be conducted by volunteers and at no cost to the Town. To learn more, contact David Berry at 751-2809.”