**Solid Waste Committee Minutes**

**September 15, 2020**

**Present:** Bryan Benson, Cathy Curtis, Tessa Kingsley, Lisa Wesel, Susan Drucker, Pat McDonough, Michael Smith, David Berry, Seth Berry, MJFavreau, Paul Denis, Betsy Steen. Jacinta Wilkins-Blodgett.

**Call 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 September 2 Minutes**: Discussion about making it okay to not list all public viewers if there isn’t enough information in their Zoom box (i.e., only a phone number, etc.). Michael Smith notes that the numbers for cardboard revenue were reversed: the correct numbers are $55/ton, down from $127/ton, which Bryan Benson confirms. Tessa Kingsley motions to approve the minutes; Patrick McDonough seconds; all in favor.

**Old Business:**

- **Shared Google Drive Folders:** Cathy Curtis updates the committee that Nicole Briand has okayed the use of Cathy Curtis’s personal Google Drive account for the committee to use as a document hub as long as we continue to share all documents via email as well.

- **Re-opening Recycling Barn on Saturdays**: Bryan Benson reports that because Caldwell Engineering has said that it is unsafe to operate inside the barn, the town is going to lease one or two Casella “Silver Bullet” recycling dumpsters. Having residents not come into the barn allows for the lessening of some of the Covid restrictions so parking can go back to the way it used to be; the dumpster has three openings that are six feet apart so three people can drop off materials at the same time, and because there are no other materials/items being accepted due to the unsafe floor loads in the barn, he is going to shift that money and open up on Saturdays and possibly Tuesdays (possibly 12 - 6pm to include an evening drop-off option). Bryan Benson says that everything happened in a matter of hours today, that the dumpster is already delivered; he had planned on sharing updated information tonight at the meeting, but then everything happened before the meeting. He reiterates that re-opening the barn on Saturdays is a go.

Tessa Kingsley asks if mixed paper and newsprint will still be taken; Bryan Benson responds yes, that it is just an open dumpster, and that collection will all be single stream; the only drawback is that we won’t be able to bale cardboard so we lose that revenue source. Also, since he is not sure how much material residents will be bringing in, Bryan Benson is looking into getting a second dumpster. A single dumpster holds 30 yards of material; Bowdoinham typically sends out 40 yards a week.

Lisa Wesel points out that cardboard is one of the only materials worth something and that that revenue loss ought to be taken into account when overall costs are compared.

Michael Smith adds that a majority of the committee sat through the Select Board’s meeting on the 8th which included a discussion of the barn, and that at the end of that discussion, the Solid Waste Committee was tasked with coming up with procedures for opening on Saturdays. Michael Smith also notes that after extensive discussions, the Select Board determined that the barn was safe until it snows, at which point roof weight would become an issue. Michael Smith asks what changed between that meeting and now. Bryan Benson answers that that decision to keep the barn open pre-snowfall was based on the 2nd and 3rd floors being empty, but the 2nd and 3rd floors have several stored items that the town has no control over — the town has removed their items but the floors are still not empty. Michael Smith asks who made the decision to shut down the barn and switching over to dumpsters without informing the committee; Bryan Benson points out that the committee is just an advisory group for the Select Board; Michael Smith asks if it was the Select Board who made the decision to close; Bryan Benson says no, it’s that the barn isn’t safe. Michael Smith asks again who made the decision to close the barn. Bryan Benson answers that the engineer stated that as long as the 2nd and 3rd floor were empty that the first floor could be used, but the landlord’s sections of the barn are not empty; once the landlord removes those items we can go back and look at using the 1st floor. Cathy Curtis asks if David Berry had been included in this discussion. Bryan Benson says no, but that the town manager has contacted David Berry to ask him to remove his things. David Berry states that he did get an email from the Town Manager asking if he was willing to remove his items but that he didn’t respond because he believes that this is something to be worked out betwenn himself and the Select Board, not the Town Manager; he adds that the email did not say that he was required to remove his things, so unless he hears from the Select Board that he is required to remove things, he will wait for further discussion. Lisa Wesel says that she remembers the same details about the Select Board’s September 8th meeting that Michael Smith does, that the decision was that as long as there were no operations or storage on the 2nd and 3rd floors that it was safe to be in there. She wonders if something happened in between the meeting and this new decision, and notes that it’s frustrating that the SWC has been tasked with a job but that we aren’t kept up to date with any changes; she adds that if it is truly unsafe for staff to be in the barn then that is obviously the top priority, but after the Select Board meeting, that was not the outcome she had understood. Tessa Kingsley notes that the engineer said very clearly that the barn was unsafe with any load on the upstairs floors and that she was left with a different impression than Lisa Wesel’s and Michael Smith’s.

Patrick McDonough asks how much the Silver Bulllet dumpsters cost; Bryan Benson answers $360 for hauling and a one-time $200 delivery fee. Tessa Kingsley asks if Bryan Benson can compare those fees to the barn’s current costs; Bryan Benson answers that he would need to see how many residents utilize the dumpster and how fast it fills up, that it will be a learning week. Patrick McDonough calculates that one dumpster would cost $18,720 a year and that two would cost $37,440 a year; if that is going to cover all our recyclables, compared to the current $137/ton hauling fee, Patrick McDonough says that that doesn’t sound bad at all.

Cathy Curtis asks if the town is still holding a lease for the barn; Bryan Benson says yes, the lease is in effect until June 30th, 2021. Cathy Curtis asks if installing a dumpster required David Berry’s approval; Bryan Benson answers that he didn’t think so because the town is responsible for the parking lot where the dumpster is installed. He adds that we didn’t need a DEP permit for the dumpsters because we’re a recycling center not a transfer station. Tessa Kingsley asks to clarify that curbside recycling pick-up will stay the same; Bryan Benson confirms that for now, it will stay the same.

David Berry asks how curbside recycling bags will be handled outside; Bryan Benson believes they will take the bags straight to the dumpster, but that they would work that out on Thursday. He says that the only thing they’re allowed to do in the barn is packaging, processing, and shipping out, and that they would no longer be able to accept bulky waste (mattresses, etc.) until they know what’s going to happen with the barn. He adds that the engineer didn’t take into account the 1300 lbs. water tank which is right over the office. David Berry says that the tank is actually over the bathroom and the 1st floor corridor; Bryan Benson notes that is is also directly under the 3rd floor apartment.

Michael Smith asks again who decided to close the barn; Bryan Benson answers that it was the Town Manager.

David Berry says that he is confused how anything can be done in the barn at all if it has been determined to be unsafe: “you’re either inside the barn or outside the barn”. Bryan Benson says that he doesn’t want to be in there at all but that he has to get “our items out”. David Berry says that “you’ve gotten everything out of the second floor”. Bryan Benson says that he can’t abandon what’s in there. David Berry asks why, and Bryan Benson answers that no one knows how long “we’ll be out”. David Berry says “it’s not going to go anywhere”. Bryan Bensons says that he understands that. David Berry states again that if the public can’t go inside, then nobody should go inside. Bryan Benson notes that if David Berry would remove his items from the 2nd and 3rd floor the barn could be operable. David Berry says that he guesses “it is up to me then”.

Tessa Kingsley poses that the town removing items from the 2nd and 3rd floor is an effort to be proactive in reducing the floor loads for long-term benefits, so she understands the need for removal. Michael Smith says that if it’s unsafe for recycling, it’s unsafe for town staff. Tessa Kingsley wonders if there could be a different liability issue for staff vs. the public. Michael Smith says that would be a Select Board decision, not the committee’s. David Berry states that all these requirements to come up to code are safety requirements that apply to everyone, staff included; if the engineer states that nobody should be in the building, that applies to everyone. He goes on to say that he doesn’t know what, if any, decisions the Select Board made about any of this, and that it all should be reviewed by the Select Board. He recommends that the committee ask the board for clarity. Cathy Curtis notes that she plans to attend the next Select Board meeting next week.

Patrick McDonough says that there has the be instances when someone needs to go into the building (the tenant, for example, and David Berry to remove his things) and that maybe it’s just the public that’s not allowed in; a lot more clarification is needed from the town. David Berry summarizes that this all needs serious consideration between the Select Board and himself, and that there is a section in the lease that includes language fora format for problem-solving; until that’s done, the barn is going to be shut down. He adds that he doesn’t know who enforces the engineer’s report, but that he has hired a second engineer who is going to do a new report; he knows it won’t make a lot of difference, but that he thought it was important to include a second opinion for the board since there is currently only one voice and some of that it suspect: he says that the current Caldwell report just re-uses the results from the 2013 survey and adds some unrelated new information, but in the 2013 report they never said to close the barn, but now, with no new relevant information, they say the situation is so bad that the barn needs to close; he doesn’t understand that discrepancy.

Cathy Curtis suggests to the committee that we are not going to be able to solve the situation between the town and David Berry but that she will advocate at the next Select Board’s meeting for the process to be fair, which she currently doesn’t feel is the case. She notes that she will address the board at their next meeting as a citizen, not as chair of the committee.

**Finance Discussion:** Cathy Curtis asks if Bryan Benson and Michael Smith could look over the remaining financial questions together. As far as Question #2, the budgeted hours vs, actual hours, Michael Smith notes that the gist of the question was to determine whether there is room in the budget for additional paid staff so that the barn could re-open on Saturdays. Cathy Curtis asks for clarification about whether $81,000 is 2020’s yearly revenue and that $13,000 of that is recycling revenue; Michael Smith confirms yes. Bryan Benson says that he is still working on Finance Question #5 (material revenues).

Cathy Curtis states that the committee will need to figure out what we’re doing in the midst of all these changes: if the barn lease is up in June, what will happen? Would the operation be moved over to Pond Road, an option which the Select Board is looking at now? Bryan Benson says that even if that were the case, it couldn’t happen quickly, that it could be up to two years: there are wetlands over there and that there are time-consuming rules for wetlands use. Cathy Curtis asks what will happen if we can’t lease the barn after June? Bryan Benson says that that is for the Solid Waste Committee to answer: if the landlord and the town don’t come to some sort of agreement, do you want to look at leasing another place, building a new place? Tessa Kingsley asks if the Casella dumpster can be placed at the public works? Bryan Benson says no, that the additional traffic would require a Level 2 permit and it is currently a Level 1.

Cathy Curtis asks Bryan Benson if he is going to give the committee a write-up of his findings regarding Question #5 (materials revenues); Bryan Benson says he will, but that he can list some of it now. He goes on to say that assuming that the barn were running as usual, that most materials (cardboard, newsprint, magazines, mixed paper, mixed recyclables, metal, copper, lead, electronics, batteries, paint) fall on the revenue side, other than mixed recyclables and mixed paper. Cardboard is down from $127/ton to $55/ton; newsprint is at market value, as are magazines; paint doesn’t cost anything to get rid of; the metal dumpster is hauled away by the collector and we are paid for the contents (he adds that the metal dumpster will remain in use at the same time that the Casella dumpster is in use). David Berry asks what will happen with the materials that aren’t part of single stream collection; Bryan Benson answers that if it can be put on the truck by residents on certain days, that he can take it and haul it, but that he can’t store it. Betsy Steen asks Bryan Benson to clarify what can go in the metal dumpster; Bryans Benson answers “any scrap metal” other than cans. He notes that cans can still be added to mixed recyclables.

Cathy Curtis asks about glass collection with the Casella dumpster; Bryan Benson says that the barn will still not be accepting glass and that residents should put it in with their trash. Cathy Curtis asks about the previous idea of the glass crushing machine; Bryan Benson says that the machine wouldn’t be an option now since it is inside the building, and he also wonders where we would put the crushed glass after it filled the ditch that David Berry suggested in his Inside/Out plan (see Addendum 1). David Berry notes that there are plenty of other options for fill.

**New Business**

**Discussion of September 8th Select Board meeting**: No discussion.

**Discussion of newly shared documents/information**: No discussion.

**Education Outreach Documents**: Tessa Kingsley reports that she has made 20 informational bulletins; the idea is to encourage actions that will benefit the town and practices that can be improved. She posts two slides a week. Any questions she has are referred to Bryan Benson. The new facebook page has 179 likes and 209 followers. She adds that the new page will not be sharing itself, but that others are very much encouraged to share. Cathy Curtis asks if Tessa Kingsley has spoken with Richard Plummer, the curbside hauler, to ask if he has any information he would like to add? Tessa Kingsley has not, but likes the idea and will follow up. Question about when the old page will be taken down; Bryan Benson says that there is no rush, but that he will shut it down once the new page’s audience numbers are more in line with the old page. Tessa Kingsley asks who manages the town’s page; no one is sure.

**Lease agreement between David Berry and the town:** No discussion. Cathy Curtis notes that she assumes/hopes that the Select Board will work within the lease’s agreement.

**Inside/Out proposal (see Addendum 1):** Cathy Curtis notes that since the barn is shut down, the discussion about the proposal doesn’t seem worthwhile at the moment, but she suggests its ideas can guide us in the long run.

**Next Steps:** Cathy Curtis asks what the committee thinks we need to do to move forward. Patrick McDonough says that he is interested in the Casella dumpsters and what they can and can’t do for us; he also asks what the options would be for materials that can’t be included (i.e., electronics) and if we’re not baling large quantities of mixed paper, how does that help or hurt us. Cathy Curtis asks if one dumpster costs $18720 a year and two are $37440 a year, how that compares to prior solid waste management costs; Bryan Benson says that disposal fees budgeted for single stream recycling included a $35000 increase by the finance committee so the costs are covered. Lisa Wesel points out that we’ll be losing some income from not selling cardboard, and asks if we were making money on anything else; Bryan Benson answers that car batteries bring in a lot of money, and that magazines and newspapers were revenue-makers as well. Lisa Wesel reiterates that we would be losing money on those items so that needs to be calculated into any cost comparisons. Tessa Kingsley notes that the overall amount for recycling revenue in the current budget is $13,000. Michael Smith states that the budget for recycling and trash removal is $235,000, and that it costs approximately $90,000 to haul trash and to process recycling; there is about $95,000 revenue from trash tickets and recycling income, so it costs the town $125,000 - $135,000 to run the operation (this includes labor, rent, electricity, hauling, and etc.).

Betsy Steen asks for clarification on what goes into the Casella dumpsters, where it goes, and what becomes of it; Bryan Benson says that all mixed recyclables and mixed paper, newspapers, and magazines are accepted — that everything is the same as it used to be, other than the container has changed and it is fully single stream drop-off now (e.g., residents no longer sort their materials; all materials are combined into single stream at the the time of drop-off). Betsy Steen and Cathy Curtis ask what will get recycled out of that single stream? Bryan Benson says that it is market driven, and that once it arrives at the sorting facility that it is out of our hands; if there is not an end user he is not sure what they’re doing with all of it. He knows that in the Pacific Northwest, facilities who have stockpiled materials thinking the market would come back are now packed with broken bales and that there are still no sales. Tessa Kingsley states that the new system meets the same end as the previous system; Bryan Benson confirms that. Cathy Curtis asks what it cost us when we hauled the materials ourselves; Bryan Benson answers that it cost us $137/ton and that we typically hauled 1.7 tons a week. Betsy Steen comments that if we end up using two Casella dumpsters the removal costs will be doubled each week; Bryan Benson confirms that if we end up using two dumpsters, that will be true but that we don’t know yet, the coming days will be a learning process.

David Berry asks how much the labor hours/budget will be decreased without as much work to do, and whether staff will be laid off; Bryan Benson answers that they will be increasing the days the public will have access to the dumpster, and that since Casella requests that the dumpster not be used without staff supervision to keep contamination down, staffing hours will stay the same. David Berry asks whether it would require one or two staff members each time; Bryan Benson answers that it will take two.

Lisa Wesel says that she is trying to figure out a good way to compare the two operations, but that there isn’t enough information (i.e., we still don’t have one number for just tipping fees). She says that in thinking long-term, we need to decide whether we need a barn at all, but that we need definitive numbers in order to plan ahead. Bryan Benson responds that it will depend on what we want from the barn: should we still have a facility for electronics, lightbulbs, oil, batteries, etc., or do you just want a dumpster for recycling? Lisa Wesel says that we seem to be giving up on recycling since we don’t know what happens to any of the single stream materials; Bryan Benson counters that nothing has changed, that our materials still go out to the Casella recycling sorting facility, whether it’s hauled away in their container or by our own truck.

Tessa Kingsley asks how the possible additional day/night hours were chosen; Bryan Benson answers that the date isn’t set yet, but that they were just looking at an every other day schedule. He reiterates that the changes all came about very quickly and they are still figuring out details. Tessa Kingsley asks if there are any other towns that we can access to get rid of things; Bryan Benson suggests Pinetree Waste in West Bath for bulky waste; TV’s can be brought to Best Buy; tires can be returned to any retailer that sells tires; motor oil can be brought o any auto parts store; he adds that he hates to see people have to resort to other places, but without a barn there isn’t any choice.

Patrick McDonough proposes the idea that if we continue to use the Casella dumpsters for the materials that we can’t make money on, but still accept the things that makes financial sense to continue accepting; Bryan Benson points out that we would still need a way to store it and pack it and a better method for loading (for instance, if it’s going to be outside he will need a better forklift), but he agrees that it in the long run it makes sense to continue taking materials that provide revenue.

Cathy Curtis asks if there is anyone on the committee who would be willing to compile and compare the financial information with her in order to make a true comparison to work from; David Berry offers that he could do some, as it’s in line with his proposals that aim to minimize costs and increase revenue by no longer giving income-producing materials to Casella. Cathy Curtis asks whether forming a a sub-committee to work on this with her would be a good idea. Michael Smith volunteers. Tessa Kingsley nominates Patrick McDonough, who agrees. Cathy Curtis confirms David Berry’s interest. A date is arranged for the first meeting (Thursday, September 17th) until Michael Smith wonders if there is a need to announce the meeting to the public. Bryan Benson believes that if there are three members of a committee together, it needs to be announced and documented. Cathy Curtis says she will find out. Michael Smith suggests that if three is too many, then do two in order to be able to keep moving forward more quickly.

**Public Comments:** No public comments.

**Next Meeting:** Wednesday the 30th, at 5:30 via Zoom.

**Next Agenda:** Tessa Kingsley asks if there are any other action items other than synthesizing financial documents. Cathy Curtis says that the next agenda should definitely include following up on how the Casella dumpsters are working out and a review of the changing financials. Cathy Curtis also says if she can get a little more clarity form the Select Board about how the committee should be proceeding, she will share that with the committee.

Meeting is adjourned at 6:50.

Addendum 1: Inside/Out Proposal

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1UbGyYEUur5eeyqPHcwCq--wBuC2e4tmS