

Town of Bowdoinham  
Solid Waste Committee  
August 19, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Attending: Cathy Curtis, Lisa Wesel, Tessa Kingsley, Patrick McDonough, Susan Drucker, Michael Smith, Susan Brown, Bryan Benson, David Berry, Paul Denis, Betsy Steen.

- Cathy Curtis calls meeting to order at 5:30.

- Amendments to the Agenda: Lisa Wesel would like information about a face-book post that stated that the Recycling Barn would no longer accept cans in the metal dumpster.

- Approval of Minutes from August 5, 2020. Michael Smith motions, Susan Brown seconds, all in favor. Susan Drucker (secretary) asks David Berry to check that he has been quoted accurately. He confirms.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Questions for Bryan Benson regarding barn tour on August 5th: Susan Brown asks why we continue to require that residents separate Mixed Paper from Mixed Recyclables if it all ends up being combined for Casella's pick up. Bryan Benson explains that the market for Mixed Paper will eventually come back (a mill in Jay (bought by China) is set to recycle mixed paper soon, but their machine isn't operating yet); in the long run it is easiest for the public to not have to switch protocols back and forth. David Berry asks what the volume of Mixed Paper is each year; Bryan Benson says that he would only be able to guess, that there aren't state-required counts anymore. David Berry suggests that it would be good to store Mixed Paper so that when the market resumes, we can take advantage of the revenue. Bryan Benson states that there isn't enough room to keep bales off the floor and that in the past, bales broke and ended up costing \$130/ton to get rid of. David Berry believes there is room in the barn to store bales off the floor and reiterates that an estimate of how much Mixed Paper comes into the barn would be useful.

- Cathy Curtis asks how Saturday, August 15th's bulky waste collection went. Bryan Benson says it went well: twelve or more vehicles came in and 3500 lbs. of waste was collected. A full truckload costs \$160 to haul away, but fees covered most of that expense. He plans to open the barn for bulky waste once a month,

on the second or third Saturday. Announcement of collection day was posted on Facebook and received 1300 views.

- Cathy Curtis asks what the current barriers are to fully reopening on Saturdays. Bryan Benson explains that the CDC recommends waiting 72 hours to handle metal and plastic waste to be sure that surface contamination has diminished; incoming waste is stored in the barn for three days and then sorted. Thursday's curbside pick-up and in-person drop-off is stored until Saturday and then sorted by barn staff. There would be too much material to handle on Thursdays if materials stored from a Saturday drop-off were included. Discussion about whether adding Tuesdays as an extra sorting day for materials dropped off on Saturdays would help; Bryan Benson says that it would.

- Tessa Kingsley asks if the volume of curbside pick-up of Mixed Recyclables has changed from pre-covid levels. Bryan Benson states that there were 200-250 bags picked up each week pre-covid, and that there are currently 450-600 bags being picked each week. Overall, however, the volume remains the same (less in-person drop-off and more curbside pick-up). The amount of cardboard collected is up from pre-covid levels due to the rise in online ordering; the price paid for cardboard has also gone up.

- Michael Smith asks why we are processing recyclables that end up not being recycled when the cost to ship recyclables is so high. Bryan Benson points out that we're not a for-profit business, that the service helps the environment, and that Casella takes our materials and is able to recycle some of it. (Idea floated by Bryan Benson that the committee could tour the Lewiston facility.) David Berry explains that Casella makes a profit off of our waste, but we allow that equation so that the waste can be recycled. David Berry also explains that in the beginning, barn staff would sort materials and then sell them but 20% was still trash. When zero-sorting became a less expensive option, the barn stopped sorting in-house. The markets no longer support in-house sorting— it is too labor intensive with not enough revenue generated.

- Lisa Wesel wonders about taking glass out of our shipments to Casella since even getting rid of it for free as clean fill would save us money. Bryan Benson explains that crushing glass is a dangerous undertaking, with shard blowback and other safety concerns. David Berry states that the barn has a glass (and can) crushing machine. (See later conversation about the need to get an electrician to test the wiring for the crushing machine.)

- Tessa Kingsley asks about breaking down the revenue brought in by trash tags. Patrick McDonough calculates that if every bag of trash weighs 25 lbs., and if \$.50 a bag goes towards pick-up costs, at 80 bags per ton, the amount of a tag that goes towards pick-up would be \$40 per ton, which is about half of the disposal costs of \$88/ton. Bryan Benson says that he and Thomas Woodin have discussed raising the price of a tag. Lisa Wesel states that there needs to be a financial incentive to keep residents recycling, that it needs to cost less than trash or the system won't work.

- Cathy Curtis says that the article she wrote for the Bowdoinham newsletter was able to get the word out to residents about not putting their cans in the metal trailer anymore. Bryan Benson explains that the metal collector (Grimmel) doesn't want cans anymore, he doesn't know why. He has a call in with another metal collector (Harvey), but in the past, they haven't wanted cans/mixed metal (many cans aren't steel). Metal cans are still okay to be dropped off as part of mixed recyclables.

- Tessa Kingsley asks for guidance from Bryan Benson as to what "friendly nudges" to the public she could include in her social media posts. Bryan Benson says that it's all about contamination. Susan Brown suggests a photo of what would be inside a typical refrigerator with captions as to what is and isn't recyclable. Bryan Benson says that the triangle is key; he also says that the triangle system is being revised; at some point it will be only empty triangles with no numbers, and the material will be "read" by a laser machine at collection facilities.

#### NEW BUSINESS:

- Expense reports for the last four years: Michael Smith says that the four years of accounts (see Google Drive documents: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1eWO3CsPQg04lzlxRo-gywvqubZM\\_6dA](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1eWO3CsPQg04lzlxRo-gywvqubZM_6dA)) are relatively standard, other than a \$7000 increase in labor last year. Bryan Benson said that he only has information about operations, not labor. Michael Smith asks why the budget line for Single Stream recycling is so high (\$35,000). Bryan Benson explains that he asked for \$23,000 once he saw collection rates going up to \$153/ton, but that the finance committee added in the additional \$12,000. David Berry asks for the annual tonnage for Single Stream materials and for cardboard. Bryan Benson says that he will get those numbers. Michael Smith says that he will produce a list of questions about finances for Nicole Briand to clarify. Bryan Benson notes that as the town liaison, all questions to the town need to go through him.

- Cathy Curtis asks about the status of the engineer's report; Bryan Benson says that the report is done but is being reviewed for quality assurance. Once that is done, the report will go to the Select Board and then to David Berry, they will discuss it, and then the committee will weigh in.
- David Berry and Bryan Benson briefly discuss the Fire Marshal's report, primarily concerning the tripping hazards at both entry doors.
- Clarification as to whether the Solid Waste Committee is being tasked with overseeing whether the barn is fit to be used. Conclusion that this is the case: that the Select Board provides us with information from the inspection reports and then we make a recommendation about next steps.
- Bryan Benson says that the barn currently has an open position that has gone unfilled for a year; once the inspection reports are finalized, he would like to get more staff in the barn and add an extra sorting day on Tuesdays. He will speak with Nicole Briand about okaying those costs.

#### NEXT AGENDA/ACTION STEPS:

- Inspection reports; revenue information from Bryan Benson; Michael Smith's questions for Nicole Briand through Bryan Benson; tonnage information from Bryan Benson for cardboard and Single Stream materials; Saturday re-opening; looking into glass crushing machine's viability.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Betsy Steen asks if meeting could be earlier or later; Cathy Curtis explains that the 5:30 slot was a good fit for most members.
- David Berry suggests that our next meeting could be at the back of the barn by the loading dock so that we wouldn't have to contend with traffic noise.
- Paul Denis shares that that he has been adding good cardboard to his dumpster because he can't come to the barn on Thursdays. He imagines other residents are doing the same thing and that the town is losing that revenue by not being open on a non-work day. Everyone agrees that not being open on Saturdays is a problem. Reminder from Lisa Wesel that cardboard can be picked up as part of curbside recycling.

- Next meeting will be on Wednesday, September 2nd at 5:30. If weather is good, the meeting will be held at the back of the barn by the loading dock. Bring a chair and a mask. (8/27 UPDATE: Meeting will be held via Zoom as per town's current protocol.)

- Meeting is adjourned by Cathy Curtis at 7:00pm.