TOWN OF BLACKSTONE

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING - 6:00 p.m.

WORKSHOP - RECYCLING/WASTE COLLECTION BUDGET

March 15, 2016

PRESENT: Robert Dubois, Chairman Margo Bik, Vice Chairman

Paul Haughey

Michael Catalano

Daniel Keefe

OTHERS PRESENTS: Daniel Keyes, Town Administrator

William Walsh, Director, Recycling Colleen Strapponi, Recycling Assistant

Lauren Zahorsky, Assistant Town Accountant

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Dubois at 6:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL – ATTENDANCE:

As noted above.

3. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS:

Ms. Hebert drew up a spread sheet detailing the revenues from FY 11 depicting the drop in revenue from FY 13 to present. The Department of Revenue (DOR) is aware of the situation and Schedule A has been submitted. The deficit for FY 14 was \$20,567, FY 15 was \$30,569 and FY 16 is \$105,239. The DOR has certified the Town's free cash at \$1,049,000.

4. RECYCLING/WASTE COLLECTION BUDGET:

This workshop was convened to rectify the deficits in this budget. The yearly deficits are clearly due to the economic downslide over which we have no control. Mr. Walsh explained the diminishing costs associated with recycling in this era. Unloading product at a loss is not a viable option. While our paper is considered "virgin product" it is easier to unload as opposed to plastics which we can store at the facility until the economic turnaround. Mr. Walsh stated he would need flexibility in his budget in the next few years. He also asked for \$100,000 to be added for tipping fees.

Mr. Walsh will submit a deficit budget but have a better idea in May of the actual numbers. The deficit could be offset by using free cash. It should be stressed here to everyone that through Mr. Walsh's direction, the Recycling Center has saved the Town over a million dollars over the past 10 years. In addition, his department is the only department who has repaid the loans borrowed from the Capital Trust.

Another option to recover the deficit would be to charge each household a fee for trash/recycling. This was tried in the past was a dismal failure but it may be necessary if using free cash is denied. As a side note, Bellingham currently charges each household \$350/year for this service and it expected to be more next year.

The Recycling Center is a million dollar investment for the Town. Getting rid of the Recycling Center would not be a wise move as the economy is already showing signs of recovery which should take about 2-3 years. The best scenario would be to temporarily transfer the Recycling Center to the General Fund. In addition, we could also move money around in the last 45 days of the fiscal year or ask the Finance Committee to take money out of the Reserve Fund to bring Recycling into balance.

The Recycling program is a wonderful operation. The deficits are no one's fault except the economy and DOR is aware of this. All of the options noted are aimed at doing what is best for the department and the town. When the sorting facility is up and running full time it will generate revenue.

On April 12, 2016, Recycling will meet with the Board of Selectmen with a new workable budget and winnable plan. The focus needs to be on what this program has brought to the town and how to provide an avenue for the recovery.

5. ADJOURNMENT:

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mrs. Bik, seconded by Mr. Keefe. There was no discussion and the meeting was adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Boucher

T-03-16-16

cc: Board of Selectmen

Town Administrator

Town Clerk