

## RECOMMENDATIONS: WASTE AND RECYCLING

### 1. CURBSIDE RECYCLING PICKUP

Recycling (including composting) means “separating, collecting, processing, marketing, and ultimately using a material that would have been thrown away”.<sup>1</sup> The many environmental benefits of recycling are well documented. Recycling significantly lowers greenhouse gas emissions associated with virgin materials extraction, product manufacture and waste disposal. More and more products can be made with a percentage of recycled content.

Falmouth has a dynamic and active recycling program led by the Recycling Committee of the Town. We applaud and support all their efforts, and the commitment of the Town Council and the greater community to recycling.

Single sort recycling was introduced in May 2006. Curbside collection of trash is on a weekly basis and curbside recycling collections, introduced in June 2007, are every second week. Further recycling options are available at three recycling stations located at the Transfer station, Bucknam Road and at Falmouth Crossing. Ecomaine processes both the recyclable trash and incinerated trash. By December 2007 54% of residential waste was recycled.

Benefits of curbside pickup of recyclable trash are both economic and environmental and include increased participation in recycling and fewer individual trips to the town recycling locations.

As stated in the Emissions Inventory, “through recycling Falmouth has avoided a significant percentage (43%) of the emissions that would have been created in the Waste Sector had the recycled materials been incinerated.”

As tonnage of recycled trash approaches the tonnage of incinerated trash, the town should institute weekly pickup for recyclable trash as well as weekly pickup for incinerated trash.

**Recommendation:**

Maintain current curbside pickup of recycled trash, and increase to weekly pickup as tonnage of recycled trash approaches tonnage of incinerated trash.

### 2. BUSINESS RECYCLING

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<sup>1</sup> Definition comes from US EPA website [www.epa.gov/region/waste/solid/reduce](http://www.epa.gov/region/waste/solid/reduce).

Maine state law (Statute Title 38, Section 2138) requires businesses employing 15 or more people to recycle office paper and corrugated cardboard. We are not sure how many employers are aware of this law. Ecomaine produces a guide for small business recycling, but we see no mention of the law in this guide. We have no information on how many employers comply with this law.

We feel that this law needs to be publicized, and be extended to have an impact on the recycling rate by businesses. Retailers should be included, and the required recycling should be expanded to include a general recycling program, rather than limiting it just to office paper.

Lacking a change in state law, Falmouth should implement a local ordinance with this requirement.

**Recommendation:**

Communicate to the Legislative Policy Committee of the Maine Municipal Association that the business recycling law should be expanded to cover all employers, and other materials than just office paper.

Adopt an ordinance requiring all employers with more than fifteen employees, and/or buildings larger than 20,000 square feet, to put in place a recycling program.

**3. PUBLIC RECYCLING CONTAINERS**

Following on with the topic of business recycling, we observe that it is still easier to incinerate trash than it is to recycle trash in public areas. More and more states and localities are requiring that when there is a container for incinerated trash, there must be a matching container for recycled trash. Fenway Park and the New Jersey Turnpike provide containers for recycled trash. This should also be the rule at events open to the public (think soccer tournaments or community festivals).



**Recommendation:**

Adopt an ordinance which requires that all outside trash containers in public places (whether on private or public property) be accompanied by a recycling container of equal or greater size.

**4. SOURCE REDUCTION**

According to the US EPA, the United States waste (commonly referred to as trash or garbage) increased 146.5% from 1960 – 1997. Per capita waste generation increased almost 63%, from 2.7 to 4.4 pounds per person PER DAY. This rate is higher than many European countries such as Spain, Switzerland,

Germany and the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, which each average 2-3 pounds per person per day.

Reducing waste preserves natural resources, and reduces energy usage in the production and transportation of packaging materials. The high school recently converted to reusable table ware rather than plastic goods.

A lot can be accomplished with individual decisions. For instance, businesses can minimize disposable containers for take out foods, and favor products with minimal packaging. Consumers can bring their own shopping bags, embrace backyard composting, use mugs rather than disposable cups, donate clothing rather than tossing items in the trash, deconstruct building materials rather than putting everything in a construction dumpster, etc. These are only a few ways to practice source reduction in our community.

**Recommendation:**

Educate the community and businesses on the importance of source reduction, and involve the schools in this effort.