

Members present: Kevin M. McCormick Allen R. Phillips
Valmore H. Pruneau Christopher A. Rucho
Members absent: Steven Quist

Mr. McCormick convened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Public Hearing On Pay-As-You-Throw

Mr. McCormick opened the public hearing and read the following notice. Public notice is hereby given, in conformity with the requirements of the General Bylaws of the Town of West Boylston, ARTICLE XXIII - PUBLIC HEARING AND NOTICE, that the Board of Selectmen will meet on Thursday, April 9, 2009 at 7:05 p.m. for the purpose of discussing a pay-as-you-throw trash program for the town effective July 1, 2009. The meeting will be held in the auditorium of the Middle/High School, 125 Crescent Street, West Boylston. For additional information, or to review the proposed information, please contact the Office of the Board of Selectmen/Town Administrator at 508.835.3490. All interested persons, groups, and agencies are invited to attend. Advertised on March 26 & April 2, 2009. He turned the meeting over to Town Administrator Leon Gaumond. Mr. Gaumond began by talking a little about how we got to this point tonight and then he is going to turn it over to the members of the SWAT team. In mid 2007, he and the Board of Selectmen discussed the possibility of creating a committee dedicated to looking at our trash system and to serve as a advocate for recycling in West Boylston. Hence, SWAT, which stands for Solid Waste Advisory Committee was created. They were sworn in to advise the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen on trash collection issues including bulk trash and recycling efforts as at the time, the Town was looking to explore ways of increasing our recycling efforts in West Boylston as well as different trash collection and disposal options.

The Committee was not created in order to bring about Pay As You Throw but rather were charged with looking at our current system and to make some recommendations on improving our current system. In 2008 and 2009, we received some grants from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection to study the concept of Pay As You Throw. The presentation tonight is the end result of that work and study over the past couple of years and each of the members of SWAT should be commended for their involvement in this difficult and sometimes controversial project. This was a difficult project because essentially they would be recommending a change of the business model on how we pay for the collection and especially disposal of trash in West Boylston. There are different models to look at and to determine which would be best for West Boylston. This was a controversial project due to the fact that changing trash service in any community is not usually embraced by the community as people become accustomed to the way their trash is collected and to be asked to pay additional money to offset those costs may be difficult for some to accept. In addition, this is the one service in West Boylston that the citizens have passed a Proposition 2 ½ override for in its history.

The reason why we are looking at this tonight is because the times and fiscal realities have changed for West Boylston due to diminishing revenues, rising fixed costs in many areas of the budget which have eaten away at the funds available to be spent on education, senior services, libraries and public safety. He and the Selectmen have struggled to balance the budget on an annual basis for several years and our capacity to balance this year's budget came to grinding halt after the state and national economy tanked, our local receipts dropped, out local aid was slashed and our available funds dried up. Things are indeed dire in the Town's fiscal condition and the Selectmen

have been compelled to look at this policy as a way to bring some fairness and equity into the way our trash is collected and disposed of.

The Selectmen have voted to try to do something to control the costs of our trash disposal in an attempt to fund other services in this year's budget. They have also shown sensitivity to the override passed years ago and currently is worth \$313,000. This policy decision will be made by the Selectmen. Today, they need to hear from the public and those interested in this policy decision to help them make the best choice for the community.

Mr. Gaumond introduced SWAT member Janet Vignaly. Ms. Vignaly explained that after researching several options SWAT determined the best option would be a pay-as-you-throw system. In 2007 SWAT was created, they did outreach and presentations to the Board of Selectmen. At the October town meeting the voters took a non-binding vote to go ahead with a pay-as-you-throw system. In 2009 the Selectmen unanimously voted approval of a pay-as-you-throw trash system. The original override amount is now over \$300,000. The first pay-as-you-throw option, Program A would bridge that gap. It is a program designed to reduce the amount of trash we generate, households recycle more and throw away less. Much of the contents of a trash can is able to be diverted by recycling and composting. This program would cost 50¢ for 15 gallon bags, \$1.00 for 33-gallon bags, the Town pays \$298,000 to \$311,000 and the homeowner pays \$48 to \$62. Program B would cost 75¢ for small bags, \$1.50 for large bags, the Town pays \$244,000 to \$280,000 and the homeowner pays \$73 to \$93. Program C would cost \$1 for small bags, \$2 for large bags, the Town pays \$92,000 to \$142,000, and the homeowner pays \$97 to \$125. Program D would be 50¢ for small bags, \$1 for large bags plus a \$100 flag fee per household. The town pays \$91,000 to \$104,000 and the household pays \$148 to \$162. Board members have no questions at this time.

Bruce Peterson, 445 Prospect Street has been to quite a few of the meetings. The SWAT was charged with two things to advise the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator on trash collection issues including bulk trash and recycling efforts as well as different trash collection and disposal options. What will be our savings and our solid waste costs to the town? Ms. Vignaly replied that the projected budget is \$425,000, the savings would be about \$120,000. Mr. Peterson asked the cost savings to each of the residents. Ms. Vignaly replied none, as you will have to purchase bags. Mr. Peterson replied so you didn't reduce the cost of trash to the residents. He thinks if you are going to charge a fee you should reduce the tax. Ms. Vignaly replied one of the things about pay-as-you-throw that makes it a potential savings is you recycle more and you will have to purchase fewer bags. It is up to the homeowner and the savings is fewer bags.

Mr. Peterson - our taxes are the same, it's not a savings, it's an increase to each resident. Ms. Vignaly feels you need to look at the fiscal situation of the town, and noted that they did consider a proposal to provide 50 free bags. Mr. McCormick agrees you are not going to save any more money, we are just going to reallocate the money to pay for other things in the budget. We feel this was the best way to do this and we need to provide services at less cost to the town. You are not going to save it will cost you more. Ms. Vignaly explained that as a matter of volume, if we reduce trash we will save money. We all save in disposal fees and less goes to the landfill. Mr. Peterson stated it is more money coming out of my pocket to fund another line item in the budget.

Mr. Peterson - asked about large items, what do you do with an ironing board? Ms. Doherty advised there are places that take large items. Mr. Peterson what do you do with really large items? Ms. Vignaly - you can tie a trash bag to it and the hauler will take it. Mr. Peterson - who decides which size bag we should use? Ms. Congdon - you can just tie a large bag to it. Mr. Peterson read an article that the state receives money from the bag sales.

Ms. Congdon – the state makes no money off of the town going PAYT and we have over 7,000 national PAYT programs. The revenue comes into the town not the state from bag sales. The bags are purchased through the state contract and there is no sales tax or mark up on the costs of the bags. The cost of the bags to the town is 16¢ to 25¢. Mr. Peterson – change in contract with the hauler, how much more will that cost us? Mr. Westerling- we have Michael Szczepan here from Allied Waste and they are very excited about PAYT. It will have no impact on their collection.

Mr. Peterson asked if the hauler still has to travel the same routes and has the same costs would there be any savings in maybe the time it takes to pick up the trash would be cut down? Mr. Westerling - there are no plans to change collection routes. The trucks will still have to collect the trash and drive to dispose of it. Mr. Peterson - how many less trips does he need to make to Wheelabrator? Mr. Szczepan replied that on Wednesday and Thursday they go to Wheelabrator and it does not matter to him. The recycling takes longer than the trash piece. Mr. Peterson - the WPI students reported that Worcester received 1.4 million in bag sales. Mr. Westerling – one of the articles at the May Town Meeting will be to establish a Revolving Fund for recycling and it will be specific for bag revenue which will all go into this fund. Mr. Peterson asked does the 1991 override have a legal obligation to pay for trash or a moral one?

Mr. Gaumond – the Finance Director and he spoke this afternoon about this subject. The answer is when an override is passed the first year it has to be spent on the services it was requested for, but after that it can be spent on other things. The Board of Selectmen has made it clear they want to continue to be sensitive to the will of the people on this issue. There is no legal requirement that the override be spent on trash collection and he believes the Selectmen believe it should. Mr. Peterson noted that it may be the current Board of Selectmen, but what if the Board changes.

Mr. Peterson – my input – leave trash along. Will there be language that the override money will continue to be used for trash, will the money be monitored each year, will there be a guarantee that the money will stay there and will the override money stay to pay for the trash? Mr. McCormick does not believe you can bind the Board of Selectmen to something done before. Mr. Daley stated that you cannot bind town meeting. The answer is no. Mr. Peterson – could a future Board of Selectmen say we are going to take the \$311,000 and go with a \$5.00 fee? Mr. Daley – as long as the fee does not cost more than the service, it is lawful. It will be town meeting that does this, not this Board of Selectmen

Mr. Daley - the Board of Selectmen will promote this on town meeting floor and town meeting has to set up the Revolving Fund on this. Mr. Peterson asked what about the override money in the budget now? Do we have to vote to move it somewhere else? Mr. Daley replied the town does not have to fund trash. They can vote no and the override money does not matter – it is legal. The town meeting body decides how the tax levy is spent. Mr. Peterson – if we decide this, how do we do this? Mr. Daley – on your votes to spend money, town meeting can stop the spending. You have ways at town meeting if you convince the town meeting body. Mr. McCormick noted that any line item within the budget can be moved around at town meeting. It could go either way that night. The only guarantee is the money that goes into the Revolving Fund has to stay there for trash.

Bruce Peterson to SWAT – what do you think about Recycle Bank? Ms. Vignaly does not think they operate along with pay-as-you-throw. They looked at what if I do not have a lot of recycling, but I cut down on my trash. It does not reward you for cutting your trash, just for recycling. They do not recommend it, but are willing to continue the conversation. Mr. Peterson - Casella said the market for recyclables tanked. Do you think at any time we will be able to get rid of

our recyclables? Mr. Westerling they are picked up at no cost per our contract. We have an option in a year and a half to extend our contract with Allied Waste for another 5 years. If recyclables are no longer a market we may have to pay for that or we may have to pay for fuel. Mr. Peterson asked are we supposed to be getting paid for our paper? Mr. Westerling replied after a certain dollar amount Allied Waste would pay us. There is another provision in the contract that when new homes come on line that the town has to pay another amount regardless of the recycling. And we believe that we have a balance not paying more.

Peter Shoreys, 180 Worcester Street. We have a 21 unit condominium/townhouse complex. He has a problem in his unit differentiating between BFI and Allied Waste. Mr. Szczepan noted that they are the same company. Mr. Westerling advised that the contract for solid waste in town is for three-family units or less. His condominium complex is not under the town's contract and he suspects that they have their own separate contract for pick up and pay-as-you-throw would not apply. Mr. Shoreys moved to West Boylston from Worcester and in Worcester they had bulk item pick up. You call and request a pick up, they send you a sticker which you put on the item and move it to the curb. He thinks we should consider that as then a person does not have to waste time finding somebody to take large items away. Mr. Westerling explained that you can call Allied Waste and make arrangements for them to pick up your bulk items for a fee. The Town of West Boylston does not have the equipment or personnel to accommodate that. Mr. Gaumond noted that Allied Waste has that service now and they have a sliding scale of fees on the town's website.

John Owanasian of Stillwater Heights recognizes there are additional fees involved. This is a very difficult year financially for the town and he commends the Board of Selectmen for coming out for a program that will cost the town residents more money. He thinks the committee has done a thorough study, it seems clear this will generate more revenue and lower tipping expenses and people will recycle more because of the financial incentive. In the context of our financial situation this seems to be the right thing to do. The Library is seriously underfunded, he thinks it is an aggressive schedule and questions whether we would have adequate time to get the program up and running by July 1.

Mr. Gaumond has a similar concern regarding the time table, although he thinks we can get it done. We have been discussing pay-as-you-throw for quite some time with SWAT and he thinks when the Selectmen make their decision it is going to be a joint effort of the Office of the Town Administrator, DPW, SWAT and DEP to educate the public as best we can. He thinks the decision needs to be made first and we have to select a bag dealer and locations for bag sales and then do a massive public education program.

John Westerling - the blue bag is 15 gallons and the purple bag is 33 gallons. Two small bags fit into the larger bag with room the spare. They took five small bags and filled them with paper and put them into the larger bag. The bag is very strong.

John Schlichte, 58 Central Street. Commends SWAT and the Board of Selectmen in considering this concept. He would rather the implementation date be after July 1, would rather go with Program A. He heard from the Selectmen's Meeting the other night that under the current trash contract if the amount of trash goes down we may have to pay more to the hauler. Would there be an added cost? Mr. Westerling – we have two contracts one for collection and the other is disposal at Wheelabrator. The disposal is based on per ton and it we would pay less for disposal.

Susan Abramson, Brooks Crossing, asked about the curbside rate of recycling in town. Mr. Gaumond replied we are from 20-24% and we monitor it through our Performance Measurement Program. Ms. Abramson asked during the course of the week, how many households recycle? Mr.

Westerling – of 50% of the home, only 50% put our recycling bins. Ms. Abramson how does that compare to the other towns? Ms. Congdon for non pay-as-you-throw, it is about average of 23% for pay-as-you-throw it is 40-50%. Northborough is at 53%. Ms. Abramson would be willing to spend a little extra, \$1.00 to \$1.50 a week if she thought it was contributing to increase recycling. She applauds the Board of Selectmen for taking this step and she will vote for it.

Patrick Crowley, the cost savings is \$100,000+, there are going to be start up costs – do you have projected start up costs? In the long run we will have more money – what do you see as net savings in the first year? Mr. Gaumond thinks there will be a massive public relations campaign which we will do as cost effectively as possible with free media. He thinks there are other costs we need to be concerned with such as illegal dumping. That is one of the reasons why the Finance Director and he are projecting conservative figures. They are thinking \$120,000 is a good ball park number. We know there will be some administrative costs and we have a great opportunity through town meeting, as we send out notices to every household in town. We will take every opportunity to publicize this. We will also work with Ms. Congdon and DEP who will work with the town on this. Mr. Crowley asks is there a cash outlay to the town to purchase the bags and then we get reimbursed? Mr. Westerling – they projected the total needed for year one and we use 1/3rd for our first order. We pay the bill for the bags and we select the state contractor. They place the bags in the store and the store pays for the bags. The \$14,000 will be paid to the distributor and the stores have a short period of outlay.

Brenda Bowman, 18 Crescent Street. What color bag will we have? Mr. Westerling – SWAT recommends green and we have samples from the vendors to test. Ms. Bowman noted an article in the newspaper today about the City of Leominster and the concerns are over size and strengths of the bags. Mr. Westerling replied we have two sizes and they are very strong. Ms. Congdon noted that there are three different bag companies on the state contract. Leominster did not use one of those contracts. They went with another company and a different manufacturer. Mr. Westerling – there are three different thicknesses and we selected the thicker bag. Ms. Bowman – are we going to accept more than what we accept now in recycling? Every day she finds something plastic with no number – how about Styrofoam? Mr. Westerling – Allied Waste has an end source and we will only recycle what we are collecting now, which can be done with pay-as-you-throw. Ms. Congdon - Styrofoam is a big issue – suggested trying antique places. Three places to take all Styrofoam and plastics – they are further away. She suggested the www.earth911.org web site. You can type in what you want to recycle or www.recycle.org. Ms. Bowman – every day I come across something I want to be able to recycle. Ms. Congdon suggested emailing SWAT and maybe we can do an event for odd items. Ms. Bowman is disappointed the meeting is being held tonight as it a holy night for many religions.

Dick Johnson, 9 Wood Street, apologized for being late, but he attended church this evening. At town meeting he asked if the committee considered hard plastic barrel containers with single-stream recycling. Did the committee check with the hauler to have containers, large 55 gallons and small, 3 gallons, one for rubbish and one for recycling, which will make it cleaner and safer for the hauler? Mr. Westerling explained that SWAT did look at this. Member Elise Wellington had a lengthy conversation with Holden as they use the same model. We would have to purchase the recycling bins for all the households. When Holden went out for a new contract this year those costs were incorporated into the overall fee. We could not do this as we are now with Allied Waste and we are not a single-stream recycling facility. Mr. Johnson suggested going with three containers. He asked has anybody talked to the hauler who could depreciate the cost? Mr. Westerling had a

conversation with the hauler. We have 2,400 households and each bin is around \$80. We could look at it for our next contract. Mr. Johnson asked would you be willing to look at that or will we be stuck with bags? Mr. Westerling replied we would not be stuck with anything. Mr. Johnson feels this is a green solution and will help clean up and get more recycling. He does not think this will help and he offered to help out on a trash contract to do this. He asked do you have any community where you provide the container over a five-year contract. Mr. Szczepan replied no. The upfront capital costs are large. If you go with single stream you also add costs as you would need to go with two trucks. Mr. Johnson is totally against bags. Irene Congdon – the State of Massachusetts made an agreement with 500 supermarkets. They produced 1.5 million bags and they will start cutting them as we are using bags to make bags.

Marc Frieden, Pinewood Drive stated that he is disappointed because at the meeting held at the library on pay-as-you-throw they said the bags would be free. He is disappointed it has become a financial issue. He does not want anyone to see it is degradation and he does like we would recycle more. On bags you buy bags and the residents makes the investment. If I do not put out any bags can I put out recycling? He was told that he could. Mr. Frieden is disappointed that this does not solve any problems and it makes us pay more and does not restore the Library. Mr. McCormick replied, we do not know how much money we are going to have to allocate yet. Mr. Frieden does consider this to be a backdoor tax and he does not really like it. Mr. McCormick replied – this is the town asking for a fee. You also want the Library open. Mr. Frieden would like to see the bags sold in the senior center and the school as a fund raiser and they could charge an extra 25¢.

Michael Vincent of 34 Bonnierview Drive stated that he is disappointed the town has not done more for recycling. Why can't the town come up with a way to include all plastics and other items? Why cannot the town work it out to get rid of other things like at the Wachusett Earthday site. He thinks that if people want to use the library they should be charged a fee. Mr. McCormick informed Mr. Vincent that we cannot charge a fee as it is a 'public' library. Mr. Vincent suggested user fees. Mr. McCormick noted that we currently charge fees for field usage. Mr. Vincent thinks people should pay fees for what they use. He asked what it would take to cancel the override. Mr. Gaumond responded by saying what you are talking about is an override and the people at the ballot decide if the override passes or fails as it is a lifetime override. The Board of Selectmen is the only body that can put an override or override on the ballot. Mr. Vincent asked for sensitivity to senior citizens who cannot afford the pay-as-you-throw program. Ms. Doherty explained that they had a format at the Library and people came up with the idea that people who are better off financially could be a go between for seniors. Mr. Vincent suggested having an income threshold and you do not have to purchase bags. He suggested a barrel with a sticker.

Mr. Peterson asked what happens with the town trash? Mr. Westerling no change. Mr. Peterson who will pay for municipal dumpsters? Mr. Westerling – Allied Waste, as a courtesy to the town they collect the trash at the municipal offices at no charge, and that would not change. Mr. Peterson – who sets bag fees? Mr. Gaumond – the Board of Selectmen. Mr. McCormick noted that annually the Board of Selectmen will set the fee. Mr. Westerling added that we cannot charge any more than the program costs. Mr. Phillips noted that before you leave tonight the Board of Selectmen will be voting on the program. Mr. Peterson would like to know when they will re-set the fees and asked about extra administrative costs. Mr. Westerling replied we do not want to incur additional costs. There is a Store to Door Program and the administrative costs are minimal. We also liked the draw string bags. Mr. Peterson feels the problem with going with a fee is we are going to lose the business subsidy.

Mr. Westerling explained that any structures with greater than three units do not receive

trash pickup. Mr. Peterson stated that right now all of this money is coming out of the tax money to which the business community is subsidizing but not receiving a benefit. He suggested many different bags and color coded bags, and charge extra so they could be used for fundraises for the school. Mr. Westerling replied we want uniform color so that we do not mimic other town's bag colors. Ms. Vignaly explained that other towns have been doing this for years. We do not want to increase bag costs this year and other communities have gone to \$5 per bag and it abolished pay-as-you-throw. Mr. Frieden questioned how do other towns do enforcement? Mr. Westerling explained that Allied Waste will leave the trash at the curb and they put a sticker on the bag with Allied Waste's phone number to call. Mr. Frieden added that we have to think about the school in ten years and we have to fix the budget.

Amy Pasquale of Woodland Street asked where do residents get recycle bins. Mr. Westerling explained that we used to have a grant from DEP to purchase bins. Those grant moneys are no longer available and we do not have any more bins. You can use old paper bags or barrels to put your recyclables out. Ms. Pasquale asked about bulk items, that are not that big. Mr. Westerling explained that if they do not fit into the bag you can tie a bag to the item. The trash has to be recycled in a bag. Ms. Vignaly noted that other towns have done events where you bring items and people clean out their basements. Ms. Pasquale would like to have the community make an effort for seniors who cannot afford to purchase bags. No other attendees have questions.

Motion Mr. Rucho to close the public hearing, seconded by Mr. Phillips, all in favor.

Mr. Rucho asked if we lower the budget for trash next year from \$425,000 to \$305,000 or \$311,000, and we do not raise enough in bag sales, what do we do then? Mr. Daley explained that when you lower the budget the Revolving Fund will receive the other money and will be used to pay those bills. We are using a conservative number. Our plan is come October we will be tracking our numbers and we will rebalance the budget at that time. At the end of this year if we have additional revenue in the Revolving Fund the balance will stay in that fund. We will look at the prices now, again in the fall and then next year at budget season. We are building a plan to generate bag revenues.

Mr. Daley recommends the Board vote this evening on the bag prices and when we do the budget we will re-state it. The goal will be to commence bag sales before FY09 ends and we will create two revolving funds, one for FY09 and one for FY10. By October we should have a sense of the way things are going. If we go to a 50% recycling rate and bag sales fall off the expense side has favorability. He would promote Program A to get us started.

Motion Mr. Pruneau to go with a Pay-as-You-Throw trash pick-up program using the Program A model, \$.50 for small bags and \$1 for large bags, seconded by Mr. Rucho, all in favor.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Recycle Bank Discussion - It was agreed to table this issue. When we renegotiate our trash contract, Mr. Rucho would like to look at all our options at that time.

MEETING

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

APRIL 9, 2009

With no further business to come before the Board, motion Mr. Rucho at 9:15 p.m. to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Pruneau, all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved: May 6, 2009

Nancy E. Lucier

Kevin M. McCormick, Chairman

Valmore H. Pruneau, Vice Chairman

Allen R. Phillips, Clerk

Christopher A. Rucho, Selectman