

West Boylston Solid Waste Advisory Team
Minutes
April 8, 2008
Town Hall Offices, 127 Hartwell Street
7 PM

Present:
Julianne Derivera
Judy Doherty
Craig Gonyea
Elise Wellington
Janet Vignaly

Present at end of meeting:
Leon Gaumond, Town Administrator
Christopher Rucho, Selectman

Not present:
Dana Karlsson

PAYT, Mandatory Recycling

Ms. Wellington passed out a list of towns that have Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) and their respective recycling rates. She cautioned that some of the rates may be high, as they may include yard waste, but reported that PAYT towns usually average 35-40% recycling rate.

The team discussed the model in Holden, where residents receive a large container for single stream recycling and a small container for trash. Mr. Westerling said that residents had to pay to dispose of trash in excess of the volume allotted. He also told the SWAT that Allied Waste is not in favor of single stream, since glass often becomes embedded in the paper, and that paper cannot be recycled.

Ms. Wellington asked if the Board of Selectmen (BOS) is looking for a recommendation for the May Town Meeting, or for the future. Mr. Westerling answered that there is no rush to have a recommendation for May, and that for any attempt to change the town trash program, education would be necessary for the program to be successful.

Mr. Gonyea observed that many people do not have a recycle bin out on trash pick-up day. He voiced the opinion that SWAT should push for mandatory recycling.

Ms. Wellington reported that she spoke with Leon Gaumond. She asked for the Selectmen's opinion regarding PAYT. Mr. Gaumond told her that the BOS hasn't taken a position but wants SWAT to look into it. The School Committee, however, is facing cuts of around \$400,000 and spoke in favor of PAYT. Ms. Wellington recommended trying PAYT as a first solution, and asked the SWAT why it should go through the effort of pushing mandatory recycling first. She cited the example of Chelmsford, where mandatory recycling only reduced trash tonnage by 11%, which, she noted, is a very small improvement compared to PAYT towns. In addition, after two years of mandatory recycling in Chelmsford, the recycling coordinator and task force came out in favor of partial PAYT. Ms. Wellington also reported that she called the Town of Beverly, which has mandatory recycling and only a 25% recycling rate, while West Boylston's rate is already around 23%. Mr. Westerling said it was not clear what Beverly's initial rate was, so it is impossible to know how much of an improvement this represents.

Ms. Wellington asked who would enforce the mandatory requirements, as it appears that Allied Waste has no incentive to do so. Members noted that information from the DEP binder showed that some town's hired someone to ensure that non-recycling households were not collected. Ms. Vignaly suggested that members could, as they drive through town in the morning and afternoon, informally make note of whether houses without recycling bins had their trash collected. Mr. Westerling agreed

to check on enforcement with Allied Waste, who he said has always been very cooperative. He said he would also ask whether the current contract would be compatible with a mandatory recycling bylaw and what their experience has been in other towns with mandatory recycling.

Ms. DeRivera inquired whether the BOS could pass a bylaw to enact mandatory recycling. Mr. Westerling said that a bylaw (requiring a vote at Town Meeting) would be necessary. Mr. Westerling told the team that a public hearing is required for a by-law change, such as a mandatory recycling bylaw, and it must be announced 2 weeks ahead of time.

Ms. DeRivera suggested that both programs be pursued simultaneously. Mr. Gonyea suggested using mandatory recycling as a “warm-up,” since PAYT has been known to be a touchy subject. Ms. Wellington urged members to remember the goal of the SWAT, and expressed concern that the team might lose momentum if it first worked on mandatory recycling. Mr. Westerling reminded the team that mandatory recycling does not cost the resident anything, but lowers the cost for the town.

Members debated whether or not to write a warrant article by the end of the week to push for a vote on a mandatory recycling bylaw at the May Town Meeting. Mr. Rucho appeared at the end of the SWAT meeting and urged the SWAT not to bring forth a bylaw that the SWAT has not had time to thoroughly prepare.

Mr. Westerling spoke about a joint meeting he was at, between The School Committee and Board of Selectmen where Superintendent Thomas Kane urged West Boylston to get rid of trash collection altogether so there would be adequate funding in the budget for education.

Mr. Gonyea cautioned that in response to PAYT, people would start dumping their trash at work. Members reported that Irene Congdon had already addressed that question, and that it happened much less than people expect. Ms. Wellington added that some people from Worcester already give their trash to relatives in West Boylston, since Worcester is PAYT and West Boylston residents can dump as much as they want, so West Boylston is suffering because it is NOT PAYT.

Appliance pickup, other questionable items

The conversation moved into discussion of appliance pickup as Ms. Wellington noted that at one point, Worcester was able to use the savings from PAYT to do free appliance pickup, though this is no longer true. Mr. Westerling noted that Allied Waste will pick up appliances for a fee. Members added that Savers will take appliances for free.

Mr. Rucho asked about whether Styrofoam packing and pizza boxes are recyclable. Members had different conflicting experiences to draw from, so no consensus was reached. Members noted that there are many questions that residents have about different items, and they should be prepared with the answers. Mr. Gaumond distributed a CD for members to find the answers within. The CD contained, among other things, a guide to safe handling and disposal of many hazardous substances.

Education/Outreach

Ms. Vignaly and Ms. DeRivera presented display boards they had prepared for public outreach. Ms. DeRivera also talked about the brochure she had continued to work on with information about SWAT. Ms. Wellington commented that the most important idea in the flyer should be that recycling is easy, and how to do it.

Mr. Westerling asked what prevents residents from recycling and members gave answers such as laziness or zest for cleanliness, which might inspire someone to throw, for example, all baby shower

debris into a trash bag so as to get rid of it quickly. Ms. Vignaly suggested that education efforts, perhaps Banner articles, could focus on issues such as what keeps people from recycling.

Ms. DeRivera reminded members of the April 15 presentation at the library with Irene Congden, which could be an opportunity for many residents to ask about recycling and PAYT. Ms. DeRivera offered to use the library computer to publicize the event on cable.

Ms. Vignaly voiced concern about the appearance of the existing MySpace website which still lists SWAT as a 17-year-old female and contains the statement, "SWAT has 0 friend." Ms. DiRivera said she would call Ms. Karlsson about building a new website which could be linked to the town website.

Upcoming events

Ms. Vignaly distributed flyers about the upcoming clean-up event sponsored by the DCR, to be held Saturday, April 26. She asked how many members might attend, and three said they would.

The existing state law prohibiting the dumping of recyclable material is enforced by the MassDEP.

Ms. Doherty proposed an approach to the committee report at Town Meeting: As the SWAT, we took it upon ourselves in our first year to educate ourselves, and we found that an increase in recycling causes a decrease in the cost to dispose of waste. In our advisory capacity to the BOS, we have a two-stage suggestion: 1) enforcement of the already existing state mandate prohibiting recyclable material from being disposed of in the trash, and 2) a later enactment of PAYT, which has been found in many other towns to be very effective in dramatically reducing trash tonnage and costs to the town. In this first step, we propose a mandatory recycling bylaw, because we need people to start trying to recycle in order to save the town money in the fiscal crisis we are facing.

The Town Meeting is scheduled for May 19, 2008. It was agreed that SWAT should prepare a report for Town Meeting and submit it under Article 1.

The next SWAT meeting was set for Tuesday, May 13. Members decided to invite someone from Allied Waste to the meeting and Mr. Gaumond urged everyone to be ready with questions for the representative. Mr. Gaumond also suggested that this conversation may be interesting to other residents, and members may want to invite the Allied Waste rep to return to field questions in a forum which would be televised on cable.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Submitted by Janet Vignaly, acting secretary