

Minutes of SWAT meeting, November 12, 2015

West Boylston Town Hall

Attendees: Julianne deRivera, Barur Rajeshkumar, Kathy Fahy

Meeting began at 7:00 p.m.

- Introductions
- Minutes from 9/10/15 meeting were reviewed and approved
- TruGreen update - Julianne talked to Bob Dunne from Parks Commission. They don't want to continue using TruGreen. Instead they'll use specific small amounts of treatment applications.
- Julianne distributed a brochure from Toxics Action Center about their efforts to help communities stay green. We can reach out to them to see what they can offer us. They may be able to help us understand which is better - landfill vs. incinerator. Julianne will contact them.
- Rajesh suggested that we ask townspeople to consider giving a cash gift to the trash collector who is responsible for collecting all trash in West Boylston.
- We have received an \$800 grant for recycling and we discussed ways to spend this money, possibly stickers to be placed on rejected recycling/trash items, discounted compost bins, or 'tri-partate' collection bins for public places
- We discussed the possibility of curbside compost recycling. We'd like to consider a pilot study where the collected compost could be brought to a pig farmer or the police chief's farm. We need to call trash collectors to see if this is an option. Cambridge has curbside compost collection. Kathy will contact them to find out if they contract with their trash haulers, if there is an additional cost, etc.
- Rajesh suggested that we not increase our bag fees since we are making money. If we have enough bag fee revenue, we might want to use it to purchase compost bins. (See addendum to these minutes.)
- We discussed the possibility of getting our own bottle redemption machines, putting them in public places, and giving the money to the town. This could possibly cause a conflict with the scout bottle collections. Kathy will check recycling machines at stores and find out who picks up the bottles.
- The question arose of how to best work with the DPW. Should we invite our West Boylston trash collector to a meeting? Rajesh will try to get trash/recycling numbers from the DPW for the last three months of FY15.
- Our next meeting is scheduled for January 14, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. (Rajesh may have a conflict due to a Planning Board meeting.)

Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Fahy
SWAT Secretary

From Barur Rajeshkumar, November 19, 2015

Here is blog by Jay Givan. It seems he read my mind on SWAT bag fee issue.

Thank you

Rajesh

<http://www.telegram.com/article/20151113/BLOGS/311139991/101407>

How to Pay for the Police Station

By jayhgivan

Nov. 13, 2015 6 a.m.

West Boylston needs a new police station, but . . .

If senior citizens, who are not getting a Social Security increase next year, vote in favor of increasing their taxes for a new police station, are they allowing the town to break their promise that a senior center would be a first priority after a new town hall?

As voters were as clear about the church for a senior center as selectmen were when they said it wouldn't be a good town hall for them, some believed the church deal proposal was more a CYA effort than a serious proposal in order to go straight to the police station.

Considering budget surplus and waste, how come West Boylston didn't propose what [Hopkinton did in 2014](#) when they reduced their operational budget with a Prop 2 ½ Underride to ensure their library renovation costs would be offset?

In the FISP video the committee stated the proposed police station will cost \$2.9 million and to be paid for over 20 years – a basic cost of \$145,000 per year of additional spending.

Can the town find \$145,000 from existing money?

The tax levy has increased an average of \$377,475 a year between 2010-2015 (\$13.02 million – \$15.28 million). The town knew a police station need was coming, so why wasn't at least some money set aside each year from additional taxes to offset the cost they are now asking?

Pay-as-You-Throw trash bag fees produce a profit. Article 18 at the May 2011 set a limit on what the town could spend from the PAYT fund, set at \$134,024.

What the town didn't do is set an amount of what it could collect in bag fees, but did admit that it collected far more than what they needed, so where did the profit go?

Regardless of how PAYT money has since been manipulated into the budget, the question is – what are the trash collection costs and how much in bag fees are collected each year, and why can't those profits be set aside for cost offsets?

FREE CASH

According to former town administrator Mr. Leon Gaumond, the town has averaged [\\$580,000 every year between 2004-2013](#), and without FY2008 (a very politicized year), free cash would have averaged over \$640,000.

Free cash is basically unexpected money flowing into the town, so consider it a surplus. Why would the town that gets \$580,000 a year in free cash (unbudgeted money) want to raise taxes \$145,000?

Then there's school budget waste; in particular administrative costs. Between the 2005/06 and 2012/2013 school year administrative costs escalated from 32% above state average to 41% above state average.

2012-13 . . . \$484 state ave / \$682 WB 40.9% higher than state average with 967 students = \$191,466 overcharge.

2005-06 . . . \$363 state ave / \$479 WB 31.9% higher than state average with 1,137 students = \$131,892 overcharge.

Why can't a portion of these bureaucratic overcharges help fund the police station?

It has been reported that a new police station is needed, in part, due to new mandates and regulations by the state. If the state is going to mandate West Boylston have something, let the state pay for the building costs associated with those mandates.

At the very least, get our state reps to waive prevailing wage laws so we can save money. If Marty Meehan could figure out a way to get around prevailing wage for a UMASS project, our reps can get waivers.

Add it up and there's plenty of existing money to pay for the proposed police station without asking for more. All they have to do is figure it out.

From Elise Wellington, November 14, 2014

To get answers to Jay Givens' blog questions (below), one need only go on the West Boylston Town web site. Under "Town Boards," click "Solid Waste Advisory Team." On this site under "Annual Reports," are the Spreadsheets that SWAT puts together for every fiscal year. Entitled: "**West Boylston Trash Program, Tons, Costs, Recycling Rate**," is the most recent Spreadsheet that compares the costs and revenues of the items that make up the town's trash budget for Fiscal Year 2013 and for Fiscal Year 2014. (Unfortunately, we have not yet received

all the numbers from FY2015 from the DPW, so we have not yet completed this Spreadsheet for the most current Fiscal Year, FY2015.).

For **FY 2014**, the Spreadsheet clearly shows the town's Total Trash Costs were **\$370,103**

Total Trash Revenue (i.e., bag fee revenue) was **\$134,600**

NET (TRASH) PROGRAM **COST** therefore was **\$235,503**

Obviously, **the bag fee is NOT producing a profit**, as Givens claims below in his blog. In fact, the **NET COST to the town's budget of our trash program was \$235,503 in Fiscal Year 2014**. This Spreadsheet also shows that the NET dollar benefit to the town of the bag fees was really only \$89,825, because it costs the town money to manufacture these bags.

Mr. Givens' claim (in the first highlighted paragraph below) that the town set a limit on how much of the bag fees could go toward covering the trash program costs when Article 18 was passed at the May 11, 2011, Town Meeting is not a very complete explanation. I believe what really happened back then was that when the Pay-As-You-Throw (bag fee) program was passed in in FY2008, all the bag fee revenue had to go into a Revolving Fund, whose revenues could only be used to cover trash costs. And, this is where the bag fee revenue went the first year that the bag fee went into effect (in FY 2009) and the next few years.

This **bag fee revenue was never enough to cover ALL the town's trash costs, so I believe that the town covered the rest of its trash budget by using the additional revenue that came from a Proposition 2 1/2 Override vote that had been passed about 20 years earlier to cover the costs of instituting a new curbside collection of recyclables**. This additional Prop. 2 1/2 tax revenue continued to go toward paying for the town's trash program for many years, I believe. But, by 2011, this revenue PLUS the new bag fee revenue was MORE than what was needed to cover the trash program's costs. For this reason, it looked as if the bag fee was yielding more revenue than was needed to cover the trash budget, but this was really not the case, as it was this Prop 2 1/2 revenue that was making the bag fee revenue seem excessive. It was therefore voted to get rid of the Revolving Fund (where the bag fees had been going) and to now allow the "excess" bag fees to go into the town's General Fund, where they could be used to help fund other town departments' budgets.

In short, NO WAY are the bag fees making a "profit," as claimed by Mr. Givens. Although, I've concentrated in this memo on the direct financial costs and revenues of our Pay-As-You-Throw program, there are also indirect benefits from our PAYT system, such as reduced trash tonnage that results in less cost for the town. So, one really needs to look at a lot of things when analyzing the town's trash budget, but first and foremost, one should look at SWAT's Spreadsheet that's on the town's web site.

Hope this helps clear up some of the info in Mr. Givens' blog.

Elise Wellington
SWAT Member

