

Minutes of SWAT meeting, September 17, 2015

West Boylston Town Hall

Attendees: Julianne deRivera, Norma Chanis, Elise Wellington, Kathy Fahy, and guests Irene Congdon (MassDEP) and Michael Kittredge (interim director, West Boylston DPW)

Meeting began at 7:00 p.m.

- Introductions
- We have a new SWAT member, Barur RajeshKumar.
- Minutes from the July 9, 2015, meeting were accepted.
- We found out that TruGreen is not doing grub control, only weed control using herbicides.
- We discussed various ways to increase recycling:
 - Increase composting of yard waste. Holden is way ahead of us with composting.
 - Increase textile recycling; 80 lbs per person per year are thrown out.
 - Michael Kittredge mentioned he has a warrant article on the October Town Meeting warrant to purchase a machine to recycle asphalt for the DPW.
 - We need to brainstorm ways to get apartments and businesses more involved with recycling
 - Maybe encourage the schools to compete for prizes to see who can recycle the most? Irene mentioned that there are no Green Team members in West Boylston schools. Kathy Fahy will contact Melissa Wallace, Assistant Principal at Major Edwards Elementary School.
 - Michael Kittredge would like to drop off new recycling bins to homes where bins are broken and/or overflowing. We talked about using recycling stickers on trash barrels for homes with large amounts of recycling.
 - We can educate the public regarding what can/cannot be recycled. "If you can rip it, you can recycle it". No plastic bags, no hoses, no styrofoam. Sorting equipment at materials recycling facilities (MRFs) must be shut down every 2 hours to pull out the tangled debris caused by plastic bags!
 - There will be 6 hazardous waste recycling days next year at the Wachusett Watershed Recycling Center in W. Boylston.
- We also discussed trash/recycling haulers:
 - Contracts were renewed in June for 5 years. Michael Kittredge will check to see how long these contracts are extended.
 - Some haulers are adding a charge for contaminated recycling. We'd like to add something into the contract that collectors will not pick up items that should not be recycled.
 - Recyclable materials are getting lighter, so it seems that we have less. Items are being made differently to generate less waste.
- Irene Congdon mentioned some recycling organizations:
 - ReFoam-It - company that recycles styrofoam (www.refoamit.com)

- Kiducation - supporting libraries, schools, and other educational programs through donated clothing and shoes. (www.kiducation.org)
 - 77 Recycling - post-industrial plastic recycling (www.77recycling.com)
- The state will fund \$10/recycling cart. We could set out recycling carts at events for recycling.
- Irene's department (MA DEP) gives out grant money that we could use for whatever we need pertaining to recycling. Money could be used for bins, hazardous waste days, kitchen recycling bins, etc.
- We talked about our bag fees vs. other towns, and about possibly increasing our bag fees. Irene suggested selling large bags 5 per roll rather than 10 per roll.
- We discussed NPR's program on the cost of recycling. Comments are attached on a separate page.
- Our next meeting will be on November 12, 2015

Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Fahy
SWAT Secretary

Comments on NPR's program *Is Recycling Really Worth It*, October 22, 2015

Thanks, Julianne, for enabling us (SWAT) to listen to this excellent NPR program about the costs of recycling. Although two panelists (NYT reporter Tierney and Bucknell U. Professor Kinneman) concluded that recycling glass and plastics is not worth the cost of doing so, their studies raise lots of questions. First, the market for recyclables fluctuates wildly, with prices paid for recyclables going way UP and then way DOWN. Were these studies done when prices for these recyclables were DOWN"? If so, that alone might have led their studies to conclude that recycling these items was costing more money than landfilling them.

The MRF (Materials Recycling Facility) Manager Rebecca also revealed that the market for U.S. recyclables dropped drastically 2 1/2 - 3 years ago when U.S. recyclables became so contaminated because towns had gone to "single stream" recycling (as W. Boylston did!). Allowing different kinds of recyclables to be mixed together in the same bin has led people to put many NON-recyclables in with their recyclables (including explosive devices that caused her MRF to have to close down!). As we know from that *Globe* article that we sent to the Selectmen a couple of years ago, 25% of the recyclables collected in single stream, curbside collection programs get rejected by buyers because of contamination and end up never being recycled. Obviously, this leads to LESS revenue from recycling, and I think the moderator of this NPR program should have picked up on this "single stream" problem - is this what leads to glass and plastic recycling costing more money than landfilling these materials?

As far as Tierney feeling we have tons of space on which to site landfills, caller "Brooke" correctly pointed out that landfills are very difficult to site (who wants to live near a landfill?) and many in MA (that are still being used?) are very old (so they don't have the environmental protections that new ones have). So, for Tierney to conclude that we should dump our glass and plastic into landfills probably doesn't make sense in states like MA. (Btw, "Brooke" must be Brooke Nash, who's head of MA DEP's recycling division and Irene Congdon's boss. I consulted Brooke when SWAT recommended Pay-As-You-Throw.) The Natural Resources Defense Council's Darby Hoover also correctly pointed out that eventually all landfills leak into the land, water, and air, and that landfills are the country's third largest source of the potent global warming gas, methane.

I wish the moderator had also pressed these panelists on whether putting glass and plastic recyclables into resource recovery plants (rather than landfills) would be less costly than recycling them. W. Boylston used to send its trash to Wheelabrator's resource recovery (incinerator) plant rather than to Casella's landfill in Southbridge. Do resource recovery plants have less or more environmental costs than landfills?

Lastly, I thoroughly agree with Hoover that Tierney and Kinneman totally neglect to factor into their recycling cost calculations the very important fact that natural resources are limited!