

West Boylston Solid Waste Advisory Team
Minutes
May 13, 2008
Town Hall Offices, 127 Hartwell Street

Present:	Not present:
Judy Doherty, Chair	Craig Gonyea
Elise Wellington	Julianne DeRivera
Janet Vignaly	Dana Karlsson
John Westerling	
Mike Szczepan, General Manager, Allied Waste Services	

Ms. Doherty opened the meeting at 7 p.m. and told all present that Ms. Karlsson had contacted her to let her know she was no longer living in West Boylston and could no longer serve on the SWAT. Ms. DeRivera had also contacted Ms. Doherty, as she was unable to attend.

Since there was not a quorum for the meeting, those present met for informational purposes only. Mike Szczepan, General Manager from Allied Waste Services (the company that collects West Boylston's trash and recyclables) fielded questions from SWAT members regarding waste collection and disposal in West Boylston.

Alternate trash programs

Ms. Doherty asked what would happen to the trash collection cost if trash were collected every other week. Mr. Szczepan answered that such a system would require two trucks, since the amount of waste being picked up by each truck would double. The current weekly pick-up system, he said, is really the most efficient for the town.

Ms. Doherty asked how Allied Waste would enforce Mandatory Recycling if the town elected to adopt such a bylaw. Mr. Szczepan gave the example of Hopkinton, a town which, in conjunction with the DPW, decreased the taxes of one of its residents, in exchange for his work as an enforcer of the mandatory recycling bylaw. In West Boylston, Mr. Szczepan added, the workers on the trucks could have stickers which they could place on bags of trash, explaining to residents that their trash was not picked up because they had not put out their recycling bin.

Ms. Vignaly asked if anyone currently enforces the State Waste Ban. Mr. Szczepan answered that the DEP does spot checks, inspecting loads at the incinerator. Also, at Wheelabrator, there is a person who watches the trash as it's brought in. If he sees too much recyclable material in the trash, he hits his horn, the hauler receives a notice of violation for a first offense, then after a second offense, the truck is forced to reload and must take the waste somewhere else. The company Wright Line was once caught with too much cardboard, and the DEP went after them. If the recyclables are in a bag, Mr. Szczepan agreed however, this system is easy to bypass.

Ms. Vignaly said many residents wonder if their recyclables are really being recycled, since it looks like it's all going to the same place in the truck. Mr. Szczepan explained that it is a divided truck with a 70/30 split. The section closest to the curb is the 70% region which is for trash. The workers hit a button to move a moveable chute, and the recyclables hit the back wall as they are tossed in, to enter the other section for recyclables. Mr. Szczepan also noted that if the town recycling rate increased to over 30%, he might have to run more trucks to pick up the recyclables, and this would increase costs

somewhat. He referred to East Brookfield, which uses Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) with bags, and they have to run separate trucks for trash collection (since they are recycling so much).

Ms. Wellington asked whether the collection fee would be the same if the town elected to go PAYT and the amount of trash were reduced. Mr. Szczepan responded that the collection cost would stay the same since the trucks would be making the same route. Ms. Wellington referred to Section 26 of the Town's contract with Allied Waste:

“In the event that the town elects to initiate PAYT program during the term of the contract, BFI must be willing to work with the Town to adjust the program accordingly. To the extent that any such PAYT program initiated by the Town increases the Contractor's cost of operation under this Contract, the parties agree to negotiate a mutually agreeable increase to compensation paid hereunder.”

Ms. Wellington asked why costs may increase under PAYT, and Mr. Szczepan responded that when trash decreases and recycling increases, Allied Waste would need different trucks as the highest recycling rate a single truck can accommodate is 30%.

Town recycling rate and current contract

Mr. Szczepan said that compared to other towns that Allied Waste services, (Hopedale, for example) West Boylston's recycling rate is not that bad. Towns where residents must hire private haulers have a very low recycling rate, because there is no economic incentive to recycle. Also, many private haulers do not take proper safety precautions and other appropriate measures when picking up trash.

He handed out some data showing monthly recycling and trash tonnage for West Boylston (WB). (The recycling rates for each month were calculated incorrectly; the correct 2008 recycling rates for each month are 22% for January, 21% for February, 23% for March, and 22% for April.) Mr. Westering added that the rate used to be 18-20%, and now the rate is 22-23%, and residents should be recognized for the improvement. Later, Mrs. Wellington pointed out that while reading the Town's 1992 contract, she noticed that in 1992 the Town's recycling rate was 17%, so in 16 years the Town's recycling rate has only gone from 17% to 23%.

Ms. Wellington brought up a section of the contract regarding the resale of paper. According to section 5,

“the Contractor shall provide a credit to the Town for the amount due the Contractor for the next month under this Contract in an amount equal to the number of tons of Recyclable Paper collected and sold by Contractor during such month, ... multiplied by 80% of the Average Yellow Sheet Price, ... less \$45 per ton processing costs.”

Ms. Wellington asked if this revenue from the sale of recycled paper was included in DEP's calculations of the benefits of PAYT and if its absence might account for some of the discrepancies in the numbers the SWAT had been given. Mr. Szczepan said that this section of the contract has not been complied with over the years, but he added that that this revenue due the Town was countered by the increase in price due to the increasing number of households in town. (See Section 2:

“...as of July 1, 2005, Contractor shall collect approximately 2,200 units weekly, and the annual per Unit Collection Fee for the first year of the Contract is \$99.48. ...If the Town does not issue 50 or more residential occupancy permits during any 12 month period preceding any anniversary date of the Contract, no adjustment to the Collection Fee will be made as of such anniversary date...provided, however, the number of permits that were issued during such 12 month period shall be carried over to the immediately succeeding 12 month period and, for purposes of this Contract only, shall be deemed to have been issued by the Town during the immediately succeeding 12 month period.”

Mr. Westerling said that Angell Brook Village, condos which are considered single family residences, put the town over the “50 or more” residences mark. Mr. Szczepan and Mr. Westerling said they were in the process of looking over the adjustments that need to be made because the Town has not received its share of revenue received by Allied Waste from the sale of our recycled paper and Allied Waste has not received what it is owed by the Town because of the increase in single family residences.

Ms. Vignaly asked about the approximate amount of waste collected from the municipal buildings and schools, and whether that factored into the total amount of waste the town pays to dispose of. Mr. Szczepan explained that the municipal building waste is collected as part of commercial waste and the town does not pay for this.

Ms. Wellington asked about Section 4 of the contract:

“Recyclable materials shall be removed by the Contractor only to such facilities capable of storing and/or marketing recyclable materials for the purpose of recycling...”

Ms. Wellington noted that with the present system, many recyclables are still going into the trash. She asked if Allied Waste was in compliance with the contract as these recyclables are being brought to Wheelabrator. Mr. Szczepan responded that this section refers to materials set in the recycling bins by residents, not recyclables that are in the trash bags, as it is not the duty of Allied Waste to sort through residential trash bags.

Mrs. Wellington asked Mr. Szczepan whether the tipping fees for recyclables ever exceeds the tipping fee for trash and he explained that Allied Waste must pay to dispose of the commingled recyclables (glass, plastic, metal) at \$35/ton. The resale value of paper has gone up recently to \$70/ton [Note: 80% of \$70 = \$56; \$56 - \$45 processing fee = \$11 per ton of paper due back to the town.] Over the years, the (resale value or town return??.) on paper has been \$7/ton, so the current value is high. Ms. Vignaly pointed out that it is financially favorable to Allied Waste if town recycling rates stay low, since trash disposal is covered by the tipping fee the town pays, while Allied Waste eats the cost of disposing of recyclables. Mr. Szczepan responded that paper and commingle recycling rates tend to rise together, and because of the money Allied Waste recovers from paper, it is worth it to increase rates on both. Mr. Szczepan added that Allied Waste is still able to make money from its recycling operations, while smaller haulers are starting to lose money.

Mr. Szczepan said the current contract is very favorable to West Boylston because the town negotiated the contract with Allied Waste instead of putting it out to bid. In the current contract, there is no fuel recovery fee, which many towns must pay and is rising quickly. Mr. Szczepan added that this year, they expect that Allied Waste’s profits will be reduced \$100 million because of fuel price increases.

Ms. Vignaly asked for how long the current contract is in effect. Mr. Szczepan said it was signed in 2005 and is in effect for 5 years, at which point it can be re-upped if both parties agree, although, he added, fuel rates are high and the current contract is not entirely favorable for Allied Waste. He explained that fuel adjustment is not even calculated using miles per gallon but in gallons per hour, since trucks may not cover great mileage but use several gallons of fuel each hour.

Education

Wheelabrator in Millbury allows groups of people to come in for educational purposes.

Mr. Szczepan talked about two programs that Allied Waste has for education of school children. For both programs, Allied Waste comes into the school for free, and has classes come out to look at the collection trucks. One program emphasizes safety around the trucks, and the other emphasizes recycling.

Ms. Doherty asked Mr. Szczepan for his best bet for the town to increase recycling. Mr. Szczepan responded that any changes made in the trash program will generate a lot of phone calls and residents who are unhappy about the change. Mr. Szczepan added that any change requires a lot of outreach.

Particular recycling questions

Hypodermic needles—stay out of trash; workers have gotten stuck by needles.

Pool chemical containers—stay out of recyclables; chemicals have started fires in collection trucks

Pizza boxes—stay out of recyclables unless there's no grease; turn inside out to show it's clean, then can go in paper recycling

Will something like pizza boxes contaminate the load? No—the workers will pull them out.

Styrofoam—WB cannot recycle, but they can be recycled at a transfer station that targets that material (eg. Harvey in Westboro)

Strawberry containers—not recyclable

Generally, Mr. Szczepan said, if the top is bigger than the bottom of a plastic container, it is not recyclable.

Glass, which is the heaviest weight within the recyclables, is the hardest to get rid of, especially because if a piece of Corningware or Pyrex is included, it contaminates the whole load.

Town Meeting and Next SWAT Meeting

Those present at the meeting then discussed the brochure that was proposed to be used at Town Meeting. Since a quorum was not present to approve the use of the brochure, those present suggested meeting Monday, May 19th at 6:30 (30 minutes before the beginning of Town Meeting) to approve the use of the brochure.

Ms. Doherty led a discussion about what should be included in Article 1 at the Town Meeting, reports from town committees. Those present agreed that a few bullet points would be appropriate:

- The Town is in a fiscal crisis.
- Some of the trash expense could be allocated to other parts of the budget if residents voluntarily increased their recycling.
- SWAT has been investigating various alternative trash programs, including mandatory recycling and PAYT.
- Through PAYT the Town could save up to \$200,000.

The meeting adjourned at 9 PM.

Submitted by,

Janet Vignaly, Acting Secretary