



Town of West Boylston
140 Worcester Street, West Boylston, Massachusetts 01583

Solid Waste Advisory Team Meeting Minutes

October 19, 2017
3:30 PM
Town Hall, Room 120

Members Present: Chair Julianne DeRivera, Norma Chanis, Duane Henry, Barur Rajeshkumar, Elise Wellington, DPW Director Vernon Jackson – ex officio

Chairman DeRivera called the meeting to order at 3:30 PM.

Minutes: Rajeshkumar moved approval of the Minutes of our previous meeting, held on September 21, 2017. Motion seconded by Henry and approved unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

Natick Pink Bag Program: Chanis reported that she had contacted the Pink Bag Program several times and left messages for them to call her back but had not heard back from them, unfortunately.

Video Promoting Recycling on Local Cable TV: Rajeshkumar reported that the Selectmen have appointed all the staff needed by PEG Director Brittany Blaney-Anderson for producing this video, so it should now get started.

Other Educational Efforts: Henry read the draft of an article he wrote for publication in the local media about where to dispose of difficult waste items that cannot be put out for curbside collection. Written in a Q & A format, it was approved by SWAT members with minor changes and he was thanked for following through on this. Henry will email members the final version before sending it to the newspapers.

Presentation to Board of Selectmen on Nov. 1, 2017: Using a presentation draft prepared and emailed to SWAT members by Wellington, as well as the three proposed scenarios of bag fee changes drafted on our FY 2017 Spreadsheet by Jackson, DeRivera led a discussion of what SWAT wants to report to the Selectmen at their November 1 meeting.

It was agreed that the success of the town's 8 year Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) program should be mentioned. Not only has it reduced the town's trash tonnage about 30% and increased the town's recycling rate from 21% to 31%, but town's trash budget has gone down 41% since PAYT went into effect 8 years ago.

It was also agreed that despite this success, the program has remained stagnant, with the recycling rate and the bag fee remaining the same since the inception of PAYT in FY 2009.

SWAT members agreed that our trash costs will probably be increasing and that the time has come for an increase in our bag fee to cover more of our costs and give residents a greater incentive to recycle. Right now, our low bag fees of 50 cents (for the small 15 gallon bag) and \$1.00 (for the larger 33 gallon bag) do not cover the town's cost of collecting and disposing these bags of trash, which averages about \$2.20/bag. In addition, our present bag fees are the lowest fees of the 147 PAYT municipalities in the state, with only 5 of these 147 municipalities sharing our low fees (according to the DEP's "Database of Massachusetts Municipalities with PAYT/SMART Programs – May 2017," pp. 10 – 18). Henry pointed out we should also expect that our costs will be going up with the closing

in December of Casella's Southbridge landfill, where our trash is taken. Although our disposal contract with Casella says that Casella will absorb any increased costs from such a closure, this contract ends in 2020, only 3 years away, at which time we should expect that these disposal costs will go up.

SWAT members agreed to propose that the bag fee be increased at our November 1 meeting with the Selectmen. Scenario #2 would increase the small bag fee from 50 cents to \$.75 and the large bag fee from \$1 to \$1.50, which would result in a net savings to the town budget of \$74,850 (the town's net trash budget would go down from \$223,940 to \$149,090). Scenario #3 would increase the small bag fee from 50 cents to \$1, and the large bag fee from \$1 to \$2, a net savings to the town budget of \$149,700. (The town's net trash budget would go down from \$223,940 to \$74,240).

The average amount now spent per household on PAYT bags is only \$68, so it was felt that a bag fee increase would not burden most households in West Boylston. It was also felt that a higher bag fee would give residents more of an incentive to reduce their trash tonnage and increase their recycling.

Jackson agreed to revise his "reworked" Spreadsheet with a few needed changes and send them to committee members. He will meet with DeRivera prior to the November 1 meeting with Selectmen and will attend the November 1 meeting as a SWAT member (ex-officio) and help with SWAT's presentation. Wellington will also attend, but Chanis and Henry are unable to be there.

Chanis advised that if the bag fee is increased, more education will be needed to show residents how much trash can be diverted to the Wachusett Watershed Recycling Center in West Boylston rather than being put in a PAYT bag.

It was also suggested that the Revolving Fund for bag fee revenue be re-instituted so that the increased bag fee revenue resulting from a bag fee increase would go into this Fund, where it could only be used to offset trash costs.

NEW BUSINESS:

Plastic Bags Ban: Rajeshkumar asked if SWAT is going to work to ban plastic bags (as Shrewsbury has done). No decision was made. Chanis mentioned that supermarkets do take back their plastic bags and that such a ban is hard on small stores as plastic bags are less expensive than paper bags.

Next Meeting: It was agreed that SWAT should set a schedule for its meetings and that this should be at 3 PM the second Thursday of every other month, so the next meeting will be held on Dec. 14 at 3 PM at Town Hall.

Adjournment: Wellington moved the meeting be adjourned at 5 PM, seconded by Rajeshkumar. Motion passed unanimously.

Submitted by,

Elise Wellington
SWAT Member