

SWAT zoom meeting minutes - September 15, 2022

Present: Julianne deRivera, Kevin Duffy (Director of Public Works), Duane Henry, Norma Chanis, Kristina Pedone, Ann Rammingner

The meeting began at 12:30 pm

Chanis motions to approve minutes from SWAT's last meeting May 12, 2022. Henry seconds.

deRivera opens the meeting to the main topic of discussion which is how to eliminate banned materials from the town's trash; these include paper, cardboard, glass, metal, wood, plastic, organic matter (like food waste or grass clippings), large appliances, tires, vehicle batteries, and textiles. Zero Waste released a report recently that claims banned materials account for 40% of waste burned and buried in MA. Massachusetts has only 6 remaining landfills which are due to reach capacity in 8 years. deRivera wondered about using clear trash bags or eliminating any curbside pick up as has been down in other MA towns.

Chanis is happy to report that the Wachusett Regional Recycling Center (which is different from transfer stations or town dumps used in other towns) has become a model of effective collection of these banned materials. A group of Mass DEP Municipal Assistance Coordinators will be touring the center next month. The state's mandate to reduce trash by 30% in 2030 is a powerful incentive to adapt to different models.

Both Rammingner and Pedone presented their questionnaires for the town's survey monkey. Rammingner focused her questions on how the residents currently use the available services (recycle center, clothes bins around town, compost bins, yard brush dump). Pedone focused on how satisfied the residents were with the current status of the town's trash management. All agreed that both types of questions should be included to then have a more targeted approach to disseminate information (having pertinent information more accessible on the town website, using social media like WB's facebook page, recycle APPs or town wide emails).

Henry commented on how some of the senior citizens will dump entire house plants in their soil filled pots into their trash. Duffy raised the possibility of increasing the cost of the trash bags (WB has the lowest price in the area by a factor of 10) as a deterrent and also to minimize other residents from other towns dumping their trash in WB. Chanis noted that Casella can audit contamination rates based on the different colors of the different towns' trash bags. Duffy stated that sometimes the Republic trash workers do not pick up styrofoam. Duffy has worked with Helpsy in Watertown; Helpsy had quarterly textile pick-ups which were very successful. Chanis noted that Big Brother/ Big Sister did curbside pick-ups of textiles.

deRivera has contacted 2 teachers at the WBMHS (Jason Disalle and Keith Willey) who are working to organize a group of students to work with SWAT in their school.

Duffy offered to read a statement from SWAT at the next town meeting informing residents about the survey and the new changes in trash mandates.

Next Meeting: SWAT will be November 10, 2022 at 12:30pm

Meeting adjourned at 1:2 pm.

Submitted by
Julianne deRivera, Chair SWAT