

SWAT zoom meeting minutes - February 11, 2021

Present: Norma Chanis, Julianne deRivera, Duane Henry, Emily Banelis (WB resident)
Absent: Barur Rajeshkumar, Nancy Lucier (Town Administrator)

The meeting began at 1: 15 pm

Henry motions, Chanis seconds approval of SWAT minutes from December 10, 2020. The minutes were passed unanimously.

deRivera had some follow up questions for Republic representative, Brian Van Dam, from our last SWAT meeting: what % of WB trash is sent to the incinerator (Chanis felt that none of WB's trash went to Wheelabrator because the town does not have a contract with them) versus what % is sent to out-of-state landfills. Also, why would milk or juice cartons not be recyclable because of being classified 'sterile?' Chanis noted that all recyclables are dependent on a business wanting that product. She noted that some haulers keep the recyclables on site for years waiting for a buyer. Because milk cartons are complex; ie., made of many different components they are harder to recycle unlike a simple cardboard box. deRivera mentioned a book written in 2002, 'Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things' by Braungart/McDonnough whereby products are manufactured with their end recyclability in mind. Our other questions: what % of WB glass picked up curbside is recycled back into glass, versus insulation, versus aggregate, versus landfill cover, versus landfill. Or even, what % of our recyclables are being recycled versus landfilled or incinerated. deRivera will ask Lucier to forward those questions onto Republic. Henry mentioned that Coca Cola was pledging to use only recycled plastic in their bottles versus virgin plastic even though it is cheaper to create plastic and recycle it into plastic again.

Lucier had forwarded the latest figures from the Pink Bag Program; WB consistently averages 6-7,000 lbs of textiles per month (11,000 was the highest, and 3,000 was the lowest). Simple Recycle is still picking up the bags. However, Chanis said that the Wachusetts Recycling Center had 10 pink bags one day because Simple Recycle delayed pick-ups due to the winter storms.

Chanis presented on Black Earth. Apparently BE is already collecting compost from Worcester businesses. Also, BE is working with the town of Sterling to convert their brush dump into a town compost site. Unlike WB, Sterling has the acreage needed and the accessibility for the site. To assess the interest in curbside compost pick up for WB by BE, the Wachusetts Recycling center has sent the BE flyer to SWAT for review.

We then focused on the Trash/Recycling numbers on SWAT's FY 2020 spreadsheet (see attached). deRivera had completed the spreadsheet (with the help of her husband and Lucier). A major change in the town's trash cost is the disposal fee for recyclables of \$85.99 per ton which began July 1, 2020; which used to be free. SWAT members agreed that despite this added cost (\$56,335.00), recycling is still the right thing to do for the health of our planet. The recycling rate hovered around 31%. The total trash tonnage for the town was up from 2,069 last year to 2,120 this year, probably a result of the pandemic causing more people to stay home rather than going to work. Our bag revenue went up from \$153,500 last year to \$166,100 this year, but the bag cost went up too (\$32,450 to \$52,737). Chanis felt that the town should revisit the bag cost issue as WB continues to have the lowest price PAYT bags in MA. Overall, the total cost to WB for our trash program was \$308,775 (\$126/household) vs \$236,754 last year.

Miscellaneous items were discussed: Banelis thanked the committee for an interesting discussion. There were no further updates on the nip bottle bill passage. deRivera said that the WHOC inmates have not been coming to town to pick up litter as they had pre-pandemic. SWAT did not know whether Lucier had convinced the BOS to write a letter of support for the Big Brands either paying for the recycling of their products or for more earth-friendly packaging.

Next Meeting: SWAT will meet April 8, 2021 at 1:15p

Meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.

Submitted by
Julianne deRivera, Chair SWAT