

West Boylston Solid Waste Advisory Team (SWAT) Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2012

The start of FY 2012 began the third year of West Boylston's Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) trash program and the second year of "single stream" recycling. Initiated by the Board of Selectmen, "single stream" allows residents to put out all their recyclables mixed together, rather than having to separate paper, cardboard, and containers. Our FY12 recycling rate (31.2%) remained almost the same as in FY11. Our trash tonnage increased slightly, going up from 1,421 tons to 1,429.4 tons, not significant, but not going in the right direction if we want to hold down costs. (The town's trash is now going to Casella's landfill in Southbridge, where its disposal costs \$63/ton.)

The good news is that the town's net trash costs in FY12 remained almost the same as in FY11. The total cost of the FY12 trash program was \$358,684 (Collection - \$229,016 + Disposal - \$90,888 + Bag cost - \$38,780 = \$358,684). With bag fee revenue of \$145,400, the net cost of the trash program amounted to \$213,284, only slightly more than the prior year, when the net cost totaled \$209,751. The PAYT program continued to be a huge improvement over FY09, the year before PAYT started, when the town's net trash costs totaled \$395,492. It was also an improvement over FY10, when these net costs amounted to \$275,976.

To ensure that the town and SWAT have an accurate picture of how its trash and recycling program is faring, SWAT developed a Trash/Recycling Spreadsheet in FY12. It tracks our recycling rate, our trash and recyclable tonnages, bag costs and revenues, and gross and net costs of the program. After approving this new Spreadsheet in October, the new Department of Public Works Director, Silvio Baruzzi, plugged in the numbers, giving SWAT an instant computation of how the town's trash/recycling program is doing, as well as numbers that will be comparable year after year. We hope the DPW will continue to enter these numbers.

Efforts to promote recycling received a boost from the state, which gave the DPW 1,500 recycling bins to distribute free to residents. Some were distributed at Town Meeting, but many are still available. SWAT gave one talk promoting recycling to a Brownie Troop. SWAT also contacted the DEP Central MA Recycling Coordinator, Irene Congdon, to find out how our 31.2% recycling rate compares to other communities. After learning that seven Central MA municipalities have recycling rates of 40% or higher, SWAT voted to make 40% our recycling goal so that the town could qualify for the state's "green community" grants. However, it later learned that this would not help us qualify as these grants are based on the number of LEEDS-certified buildings.

Concerned that non-recyclables are being thrown into recycling bins and collected as if they were recyclables, SWAT researched whether these non-recyclables, such as plastic bags, styrofoam, and plastic toys, contaminate loads of recyclables so that they get rejected for recycling. To learn more about this, SWAT and the DPW Director toured Casella's recycling plant in Auburn on April 27, 2012. This is where our commingled recyclables are taken by Allied Waste, our collector, to be sorted and sold for recycling. Accompanied by Allied Waste General Manager Michael Szczepan, SWAT saw how commingled recyclables get separated at Casella's. Recyclables coming in to Casella have a 10% contamination rate, but a 15% rate is allowed by the state. After we told them that Verallia, a MA glass recycling company, had testified at the Statehouse that only 40% of the glass collected in commingled curbside recycling programs actually gets recycled into new bottles, they confirmed that contamination of glass is the biggest contamination problem. Because glass is so easily contaminated by ceramics, 40% gets rejected for recycling and ends up being landfilled, according to Verallia! SWAT also learned that Casella does not take plastic bags for recycling even though SWAT frequently sees them in our recycling bins. The banned styrofoam found in recycling bins gets burned. They do, however, take for recycling: window envelopes, plastic bottle caps, pizza

boxes with NO food stains, and aluminum foil and pie plates. SWAT was unable to determine how much of our recyclables are, in fact, being sold to manufacturers and recycled into new products, nor how much is just being sent to a landfill.

Concerned that "bulk items" (items that do not fit in a PAYT bag or that exceed 40 pounds) are sometimes picked up by our collector, SWAT asked that the incorrect wording re bulk items on the instruction sheet that comes with the PAYT bags be corrected (which was done in FY13). SWAT also examined the town's contract with Allied Waste and copied the section about banned trash items, such as bulk items, propane tanks, furniture, etc. To educate the public about these banned items, copies of this contract section were distributed at the May 2012 Town Meeting, where SWAT reported on its tour of the Casella plant.

Interested in finding alternatives for disposal of bulk, banned or "difficult" trash items, SWAT also toured the Wachusett Watershed Regional Recycling Center in West Boylston. New information about the disposal alternatives it offers was incorporated into the new DPW Trash Calendar. SWAT also updated its 2008 trash/recycling brochure with this new information. It was distributed at the October 2011 and May 2012 Town Meetings.

Complaints the town has received about its drawstring type of PAYT bags ripping at the top were considered by SWAT, which felt that the alternative, tie bags like Worcester uses, might have other problems, such as less capacity and inadequate closure.

Five SWAT meetings were held during FY12 and SWAT reports were given at both the October 2011 and May 2012 Town Meetings. Committee member Craig Gonyea resigned in FY12.

Julianne DeRivera, Chairman

Judy Doherty

Elise Wellington

Mary Ambrose