

## West Boylston Solid Waste Advisory Team (SWAT) Annual Report

### Fiscal Year 2015

The start of FY 2015 began the sixth year of West Boylston's Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) trash program and the fifth year of "single stream" recycling (where all our recyclables can be mixed together in the same bin). Our trash tonnage increased slightly from 1,416 tons in FY14 to 1,433 tons in FY15, not a significant change but heading in the wrong direction if we want to hold down costs. The town's trash went to Casella's landfill in Southbridge, where its disposal cost was \$66.52/ton at the end of FY15, as opposed to \$65.73/ton at the end of FY14. Unlike trash, our recyclables have NO disposal fee, so recycling saves the town money. Our FY15 **recycling rate of 32.1 % increased slightly** from FY14, when it was 31.1% - a good trend. Although "single stream" recycling made it easier for residents to recycle, the town's recycling rate has not jumped significantly since before single stream started, when it was around 31%.

The town's total trash program costs for FY15 were \$375,898 (Collection - \$237,462 + Disposal - \$94,855 + Bag cost - \$43,581 = \$375,898). This was only a 1.5% increase over FY14, when the total trash program cost was \$370,103. With bag fee revenue of \$135,200, **the net cost of the trash program in FY15 amounted to \$240,698, which is 2.2% more than the prior year**, when the net cost totaled \$235,503. The trash program continued to be a huge improvement over FY09, the year before PAYT started, when the town's net trash program costs totaled \$395,492. This means **the town's net trash costs have declined 39% since the year before PAYT began – very positive news!**

To ensure that the town and SWAT have an accurate picture of how our trash and recycling programs are faring, SWAT developed a Trash/Recycling Spreadsheet in FY12. It tracks our recycling rate, our trash and recyclable tonnages, bag fee revenues, and gross and net costs of the program. This **Spreadsheet comparing FY 2015 to FY 2014 is attached.**

SWAT's concern that bulky or banned trash items are sometimes put out for pick-up continued, as did its concern that "single stream" recycling results in more contamination of recyclables than when paper and container recyclables are set out in separate bins. At the May 2015 Town Meeting, SWAT summarized our trash and recycling picture, as shown in the FY 2014 Spreadsheet (attached). It also **advised residents not to put plastic bags or styrofoam in their recycling bins as these are contaminants and cannot be recycled at Casella's Materials Recycling Facility (MRF).** In fact, they jam the MRF's equipment, causing the MRF to have to shut down! **Residents were urged to take styrofoam, as well as textiles (which make up 6% of solid waste), to the Wachusett Watershed Recycle Center in town.** *(Plastic bags should be taken back to the grocery store.)* The Recycle Center's pamphlets were distributed and residents were also **urged to compost food waste**, which makes up at least 15% of our solid waste.

SWAT reported at the October 2014 Town Meeting that it had **voted to support the MA bottle bill update (Question 2 on the November 2014 state ballot) because it will reduce trash, reduce litter, and increase recycling**. As individuals, SWAT members advocated strongly for this environmental measure, collecting over 400 signatures to get this bill on the ballot. The update would add to the bottle bill the many non-carbonated drinks (water bottles, sports drinks, iced tea, fruit drinks) that have come on the market since the bottle bill first passed in 1982. Only 23% of these “new” drink containers are now being recycled, even with all the curbside recycling programs that exist today. The rest of these containers add to the town’s trash load and litter. This update would raise the recycling rate of these “new” containers to about 70 – 80 %, reducing the town’s trash and litter pick-up costs. Unfortunately, the bill was defeated at the November ballot.

With the **town’s trash collection and trash disposal contracts coming up for renewal** in June and December 2015, respectively, the Town Administrator asked **SWAT** for its **input** on February 24, 2015. After receiving different signed versions of these contracts that were identically dated, SWAT finally received the correct versions. Using DEP guidelines, one member researched what needed to be included in them. Additional research was done on whether landfilling or incinerating trash is environmentally preferable. Unfortunately, no consensus exists on this question and neither DEP nor EPA has taken a position, so SWAT felt it could not advise which option the town should pursue. On March 27, 2015, SWAT emailed its comments on these contracts, offering much background information and suggesting that RFPs be issued so that lower bids might be offered. For the collector’s contract, SWAT suggested that proposals with and without “single stream” recycling be sought (because of the contamination in recyclables found in “single stream”); that financial incentives for the collector not to collect banned trash and banned recycling items be included; and that a financial incentive for reducing the town’s trash tonnage be included. SWAT also questioned if the disposer (Casella) was in compliance with the part of our present contract requiring compliance with state environmental laws. Although an RFP was issued for the disposal contract, both existing contracts were renewed without any real changes.

During FY15, SWAT met four times and Kathy Fahy was officially appointed to SWAT by the Board of Selectmen.

West Boylston Solid Waste Advisory Team – FY 2015,

Julianne DeRivera, Chairman  
Kathy Fahy, Secretary  
Norma Chanis  
Elise Wellington