

SWAT zoom meeting minutes - May 11, 2023

Present: Julianne deRivera, Kevin Duffy (Director of Public Works), Ann Ramminger, Norma Chanis, Irene Congdon (Central Mass Municipal Assistance Coordinator)
Absent: Duane Henry, Kristina Pedone, Jennifer Warren-Dymont (Town Administrator)

The meeting began at 12:45 pm

Chanis motions to approve minutes from SWAT's last meeting April 13, 2023. Ramminger seconds.

deRivera notes no resident has engaged with SWAT. Ramminger had 2 positive comments for SWAT's survey. Town administrator unavailable to discuss any inquiring emails to SWAT through town's website. Will need to follow up at our next meeting.

Chanis is doing two presentations at the town library in mid-June; the first will address recycling Do's and Don'ts while the second one will address composting tips. Chanis may then take these presentations to other local libraries. In addition, Chanis reviewed her display board information she did for WB Clean Up Day illustrating what recyclables go where including plastic films; this information is available on the TREX webpage.

(whether they should go to the supermarket, or WWRRC, or trash). However, major areas needing further educational outreach include getting milk cartons out of the recycling bins, stopping folks from placing their recyclables in another plastic bag (which would just be dumped whole into trash at Casella), cleaning foodstuff or liquids out of bottles/containers to be recycled, or putting bubble wrap or plastic bags in their recycle bin.

Ramminger asked Duffy why compost bins were in the town budget; that is the money set aside for the WWRRC to buy compost bins and kitchen scrap buckets. Chanis added that all the member towns of WWRRC take turns paying for a shipment.

Pedone unavailable for WB Clean up Day report. Will table discussion for our next meeting.

deRivera spoke about her attempts to work with WBMHS to institute a food waste diversion program in the cafeteria and/or to switch over from plasticware to silverware in the cafeteria. Chanis wondered if they even have a sink or dishwasher. Unfortunately, the last day of school is fast approaching (June 13th) and the last School Committee meeting of the school year just happened last night.

Congdon introduced herself as the Regional Recycling Coordinator for Central Mass. She last worked with SWAT in 2008 to help us get PAYT passed. Congdon commented that WB has the

lowest bag costs anywhere (except in Sturbridge where Casella operates the landfill and there are no transportation costs). In Worcester, 15 gallon bags are \$1. Elsewhere they range from \$1.25, \$1.50, \$1.60, to \$2.50 in Littleton. For the 33 gallon bags, WB's cost \$1 (along with Sturbridge and Pepperell); versus \$1.50, \$2.00, \$2.50, \$3.25 (Athol), \$4.00 (Winchester), up to \$5.00 (Westminster but this cost includes their whole trash program as they pay no trash taxes). Congdon emphasized having bag fees comparable to our neighbors to minimize dumping from other towns with higher bag fees.

Congdon went on to explain that our real estate taxes should cover our collection costs while trash bags should cover our disposal costs. Congdon stressed that increasing trash bag price in small increments every 3-5 years (it's been 15 years for WB) would incentivize folks to decrease their trash; as an example, when Shrewsbury increased their 15 gallon bag fees by 10 cents, and their 33 gallon bag fee by 20 cents, the town had a 300 lb decrease in trash production and their individual yearly household trash production decreased to 1000 lbs (WB's rate is 1259 lbs per household per year).

As for recycling, the 'best' number is 580 lbs per household per year; WB's is 368. Although as packaging becomes less, weight will no longer be the best indicator of recycling efficacy.

Chanis wondered if there was an equation that could be used to calculate what the costs should be.

The discussion then turned to carts as WB's hauler contract is due for renewal in 2 years. Congdon was very clear that larger carts result in more trash production (35 gallon cart versus 95 gallon cart). Different towns have developed different solutions: Shrewsbury has kept their PAYT bags but has carts for their recyclables. Sterling was able to get free recycling carts. Some towns like Upton and Fall River, use their PAYT bags inside carts so that trash collection can still be automated; there is a camera inside the trash truck recording the correct bag color. Any different colored bag is recorded and the address of the offense is sent a fine. Any overflow trash might require a household to obtain a second cart. Naturally any hauler gets paid more if it collects and disposes of more trash; but our collective goal needs to be zero waste. So, the contract with the hauler would need to change from tons collected to services provided.

Congdon then showed a pie graph for trash composition from Wheelabrator: 12% is material that could be recycled, 32% is content that could be composted, 5% was textiles which could have been diverted, 4% was wood, and only 38% of the trash was really trash. Clearly there is room for improvement. Grafton used its RDP (recycling dividends program) monies to buy carts for the residents. Some farmers markets may be able to accept food waste from not only their on-site activities but also for drop-off if the truck is onsite. NYC has a city-wide composter container program for its residents; they use an APP to unlock it to divert their food and plant waste. Food waste bans have been in place since 1990; the Board of Health has to approve haulers to follow these waste bans. Unfortunately, apartment complexes and businesses are so far exempt as they have private haulers.

Congdon then reviewed some ways for towns to get RDP points and thus grant money. Each regulation for trash reduction or for increasing recycling gets 2 points; if the regulations are enforced, towns get 4 points. For example, just translating our annual DPW mailer into Spanish would garner DEI (diversity equity inclusion) credits and therefore, RDP points. Or, having a hazardous waste collection happen at least twice a year.

Given how important but complex the trash topic is, Congdon agreed to revisit our SWAT meeting again, but only after June 15th.

Next Meeting: undetermined.

Meeting adjourned at 2:15 pm.

Submitted by
Julianne de Rivera, Chair SWAT