

SWAT zoom meeting minutes - April 13, 2023

Present: Julianne deRivera, Kevin Duffy (Director of Public Works), Ann Ramminger, Duane Henry, Kristina Pedone, Norma Chanis, Jennifer Warren-Dymont (Town Administrator)

The meeting began at 12:30 pm

Chanis motions to approve minutes from SWAT's last meeting March 9, 2023. Ramminger seconds.

deRivera reviews the major points of SWAT's Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2022; trash tonnage increasing, recycling tonnage decreasing along with a decreasing recycling rate of 24% (down from 31%). On the upside, there was no recycling tipping fee (due to the boom in the recycling market) saving the town \$51,487 last year. Unfortunately, according to Duffy, the tipping fee for recycling will return starting July 1, 2023. Ramminger wondered whether the recycling rate decreased due to the pandemic; de Rivera noted that was certainly true for the schools who stopped all recycling priorities due to the pandemic. Ramminger motions to approve the annual report, and Henry seconds.

SWAT thanked Chanis, Pedone, and Ramminger for their concerted efforts to summarize SWAT's survey results. Warren-Dymont posted those results on April 2, 2023 on the SWAT web page, town news, to town e-subscribers, and town's Facebook. As to how best to address the citizen's concerns, Chanis is doing two presentations at the town library in 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 will do a display board for WB Clean Up Day illustrating what recyclables go where including plastic films (whether they should go to the supermarket, or WWRRC, or trash). Chanis noted that DEP gives towns grant monies for their efforts to reduce trash and/or increase recyclables. She noted that the response to the Regional Waste Action Plan Community survey was small and therefore skewed. However, major areas of concern included 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), and cleaning foodstuff or liquids out of bottles/containers to be recycled.

Warren-Dymont voiced her concern that trash disposal costs will only be increasing and that at some point there will not be enough in the town's budget to cover it. As a start, she recommended a serious discussion to increase the cost of the PAYT bags. Duffy proposed inviting Irene Congdon, Central Mass Municipal Assistance Coordinator for DEP, to speak about the pros and cons of toters vs. PAYT bags and how best to engage the citizens in this important matter, at our next SWAT meeting (Duffy will send Congdon an invitation). Pedone voiced her

concern that if the price of the PAYT bags are increased, and then, when our contract with Republic expires in 2025, and there is another cost increase, folks will be upset. de Rivera mentioned people requesting totes as an option over bags. Chanis noted that totes are a million dollar investment for the town and expensive for the consumer. For example, Chanis noted that she spends a dollar a month on her PAYT but if she were forced to use a tote, she would be paying \$18 per week. Chanis noted some towns are using PAYT bags inside their totes; and that many towns are struggling with this issue; some towns are even going back to PAYT bags over totes.

Pedone is feeling on track with the planning for WB Clean Up Day; students and their families, Boy/Girl Scout Troops have signed up. Also, a new sponsor, Maken Zi Ramen & Rice Bowls, recently agreed to supply food for the after clean-up festivities. According to Pedone, the MEES has already collected 4 large bags of donated clothing and a clothing drive at WBMHS is in effect til April 22. Duffy will call Republic for a dumpster to be placed in the DPW parking lot for next week. Henry noted that he has already collected enough trash along Shrewsbury St to fill 6 large yellow bags and that he is only half way through. Warren-Dymont is now working with Nicole at Helpsy to pursue curbside textile pick-ups. Chanis is pleased with how responsive Helpsy has been with their management of their 2 bins at the WWRRC.

deRivera spoke about attempts to work with WBMHS to institute a food waste diversion program in the cafeteria and to switch over from plasticware to silverware in the cafeteria. De Rivera has registered the school for the Green Team so they are entitled to their vast amount of information. She left a 13 page downloaded document that describes an overview of the waste diversion process for the high school principal Chris Fournier on April 7th. She also forwarded an email about a grant for silverware to Jason Disalle (high school teacher). de Rivera hopes to observe the current system in the school cafeteria before she meets with the cafeteria staff, school committee, and other stakeholders ?Board of Health, before the end of the school year so the new program can be rolled out at the beginning of the new school year.

Next Meeting: SWAT will be May 11, 2023 at 12:30pm

Meeting adjourned at 1:25 pm.

Submitted by
Julianne de Rivera, Chair SWAT