

## SWAT zoom meeting minutes - May 12, 2022

Present: Julianne deRivera, Nancy Lucier (Town Administrator), Kevin Duffy (Director of Public Works), Duane Henry, Norma Chanis, Kristina Pedone, Ann Ramminger

The meeting began at 1: 15 pm

Chanis motions to approve minutes from SWAT's last meeting January 13, 2022. Ramminger seconds.

deRivera reviews SWAT's annual report which revealed a substantial cost increase of the town's trash due to the new contract with Republic from 6-1-20 whereby the curbside collection cost increased from \$21,000 per month to \$28,000 per month, the usual 4% cost of living increase and finally the new added cost for disposal of our recyclables (\$86/ton) which used to be free. Chanis wondered whether the town could adjust that last rate given the improved market for recyclables now and information from a DEP rep stating that no town should have to pay for their recyclables. Pedone and Duffy both confirmed the fixed rate until the new contract in 2025. deRivera reported that the total trash tons decreased from 1464 last year to 1450 this year; as did the recyclable tons from 655 last year to 598 this year.

Pedone reported on the success of WB's Clean-up day held April 30th. Pedone had made 150 packets for the volunteers (which included gloves, vest, Tshirts) and 130 of the packets were used. The WB high school had 27 student volunteers. The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and some local churches all had volunteers. The online sign up form went well and will be continued for next year; 47 people used it and the rest showed up the day of. The DPW did pick up the yellow bags left on the streets; as did the DCR in their area. The food available was 'amazing.' One volunteer wondered about coordinating clean-up day in the future with other towns. Pedone will forward the streets that were cleaned to Chanis to determine which streets were not done.

deRivera wondered if the merger of Republic with US Ecology would have any impact on the town's handling of hazardous waste; Duffy felt it was more of a general marketing announcement. Chanis noted that the Wachusett Regional Recycling Center will still be handling the hazardous waste for the town.

The discussion then moved on to the issue of how to educate/incentivize WB residents to minimize waste. Duffy commented that the state is looking to decrease trash by 10% by 2030. deRivera wondered whether an APP as used by other towns would be helpful. Ramminger mentioned 'Recycle Coach' APP which apparently the town can purchase (?use DEP grant funds for this) for the residents and would then garner more DEP points. This APP may be

easier for residents to navigate than the town web pages. It would inform them of how to recycle and send them reminders among other things.

Henry mentioned that the local businesses in our industrial section do not routinely cover their dumpsters so that their litter is blown onto our streets. Henry wondered whether SWAT could design some pamphlet that could be given to these businesses bringing this problem to their attention and requesting that they minimize this issue. Ramminger wondered what local businesses are expected to do; Chanis answered that they do their own contracting for trash which therefore does not affect the town's trash numbers. Ramminger thought of getting a list of the local businesses and sending them friendly emails to address such issues.

The textile content in our trash continues to be an issue since Simple Recycle left; Chanis reiterated the presence of many clothes and textile collection bins around town.

Compost is another major contributor to the town's trash tonnage. Apparently, Mass DEP has already had a law on the books since 10-1-14 mandating diversion of commercial organic waste from the trash if more than a ton of it is generated per week (that figure will be decreased to half a ton in 11-1-22). Residential composting either via curbside (lower rate for town if greater than 500 houses participate- Black Earth or Bootstrap, and can add more products to curbside composting like bones/meat/dairy) or backyard (? do an educational program at the library).

Ramminger wonders whether doing a survey monkey poll would be helpful in understanding what the residents see as important in terms of composting (?curbside versus backyard), trash issues, and recycling. What would they like to see done differently? Chanis said that previous town surveys only had 2 questions on the survey that dealt with trash issues and they were just about the bag quality.

Single use plastic bags are another concern; the WB schools are working with the Rotary Club in doing a NEX-TREX program which means that if they collect enough plastic bags the school will receive a composite bench.

Lucier reported on the Green Community program whereby a community can obtain state funds if they cut municipal energy by 20%. For WB, it means using more LED lighting not only for street lights, but also in the DPW and the Fire department and the boiler room in the schools. Purchasing an electric vehicle is another option; such as an EV school van (pending). Lucier is also pitching the idea for raised garden beds and compost bins at the schools to engage the students in the whole process. Duffy noted the DPW getting 3 new trash containers from the DEP for the town common. Ramminger mentioned getting free light filters from the WB light department for the street lights near her house to minimize light pollution.

Next Meeting: SWAT will be July 14, 2022 at 1:15pm

Meeting adjourned at 2:15 pm.

Submitted by  
Julianne deRivera, Chair SWAT