

SWAT zoom meeting minutes - January 13, 2022

Present: Norma Chanis, Julianne deRivera, Nancy Lucier (Town Administrator), Kevin Duffy (Director of Public Works), Kristina Pedone (member of BOS and now SWAT), Ann Ramminger (guest)

Absent: Duane Henry,

The meeting began at 1: 15 pm

Introductions made as SWAT has new attendees today.

Chanis motions, Lucier seconds approval of SWAT minutes from October 14, 2021. The minutes were passed unanimously.

Lucier confirmed lack of contact from Simple Recycling; no outreach and no further pink bag pick-ups in town. However, there still are several drop-off boxes through-out town; behind the WB Middle High School, behind Our Lady of Good Counsel, behind The Mill restaurant, at Surfside Pool Company store, and finally at the Wachusett Watershed Regional Recycling Center.

deRivera reviewed the WB trash program spreadsheet for FY '21 to date: total trash tons \$1450.65, disposal cost per ton at \$71, so total trash disposal cost \$103, 025 (vs FY '20 \$102,490). Total recyclables ton 598.75. ?new disposal cost per ton of recyclables \$85.99. ?total recyclables disposal cost \$51,422.02. Curbside collection cost \$344,799.96 (vs FY '20 \$263,312) If it was solely due to the 4% increase per year, the number should be \$273,844. Number of households served remains the same at 2458. The remaining numbers for 15 gallon and 33 gallon bags sold and the resulting revenue still need to be calculated.

The next topic on the agenda for discussion was the option of moving toward a full automation trash collection program from Republic. deRivera noted that at the BOS meeting on December 1, 2021 where 3 representatives from Republic presented their position towards the benefits of automation; greater safety for the trash collectors, fewer trash collectors needed, and neatness to the town, Chris Rucho seemed committed to maintaining the current PAYT system as it worked; Chanis affirmed the benefits of PAYT with minimal cost to the residents, low contamination rates, and less trash tonnage generated. Pedone countered with the general trend of trash collection moving towards automation, and that WB may have to pay more for the PAYT manual service in the future. Lucier notes that there is a built-in 4% increase in trash services each year, but that this is a lower than usual rate. Duffy, who is from Watertown which uses this system, feels it has been favorable, altho notes that Watertown is denser city than WB. All agreed that a future discussion would be in order when the current contract expires in 3 years (with an option to extend it for 5 more years). deRivera wondered if the dual stream

recycling could return. Lucier felt it would be unlikely as our trash handlers have already invested in expensive machinery for the single stream recyclables. Chanis countered that if recyclables became more valuable, the haulers may reverse to dual stream to decrease the contamination rate. deRivera noted that when WB went from dual stream to single stream, the recycling rate stayed the same despite the supposed added convenience.

Ramminger wondered if educating the public on how to reduce, re-use, and then recycle would have any impact; also, noting how hard it is to change the current high rate of consumerism and the disposable economy paradigm. Chanis felt SWAT could do more to reduce trash volume thru increasing education with the town facebook page, links for recycling on the DPW website, short educational videos on the cable access channel about recycling, links to the DEP website as well), and working with the students in town. Pedone remembers past projects from students that focused on recycling- like art from recycled material or book swaps or recycling BINGO games. deRivera will forward the emails from The Green Team explaining their sustainability curriculum for students in any grade to Ramminger. deRivera will contact Jody Howard, the teacher at the WBHS in charge of the HS students that need a sustainability program. Chanis also wonders about possibly increasing bag fees, and working with BlackEarth who collect curbside compost and textiles as other ways to decrease trash in town. Chanis noted that the WWRRC gets on average 100 cars/hour. Also the reuse center there gets a ton of items every day they are open; separate from the debris brought in.

Next item was planning for the town wide clean-up day associated with Earth Day April 22 ; all agreed that it would be held April 30th rain or shine, with the Senior center being the headquarters. Pedone and Chanis to co-lead the effort. Lucier noted that if funds are needed for the event, the co-chairs could approach the town celebration committee as they have funds for celebrations and this event would fall under that category.

Lucier reported that the new bottle bill (in which plastic water bottles and nips will also have deposits and where the deposit is increased from 5 cents to 10 cents) was still pending.

Next Meeting: SWAT will be March 10, 2022 at 1:15pm

Meeting adjourned at 2:20 pm.

Submitted by
Julianne deRivera, Chair SWAT