

**Chelmsford Recycling Committee Minutes**

**June 6, 2019**

**Town Offices, Room 200, 7:00 pm**

**Members Attending:** Mark Gallagher, Rebecca Gore, Aaron Cunningham, Nick Parlee, Lee Williams, Kevin Goscila, Cynthia Fiekers, Stephen Maher

**Members Absent:** Jocelyn Demuth, Karen Willis

**Visitors:** Sara Ward Medsger, Paul Cohen, Town Manager

**Business**

**Minutes**

The May meeting minutes were approved.

**State Regional Coordinator Presentation**

Julia Greene, our state DEP regional recycling coordinator for Northeast District 3 presented to the Committee on recycling trends and programs in the Commonwealth.

Some of the interesting points from her presentation included:

- The state is in the process of revisiting its 10-year solid waste strategic plan. Under the current plan, there was goal to reduce solid waste disposal per capita in the state by 30% by 2020. Actual per capita waste reduction has been only 17%.
- Most landfills and incinerator facilities are at or near capacity in the state. This has resulted in the state becoming a net exporter of waste to neighboring states.
- In 2014, the state enacted a regulation that requires all institutions that generate a ton or more of food waste per week to compost. Under the new ten year plan this requirement will likely be reduced to 0.5 ton per week. Municipalities may also be required to compost in 10 years as well.
- According to the comprehensive statistics collected by the DEP, in the latest year only 9% of all waste in Massachusetts was recycled!
- China's decision to reject most US recyclables has wreaked havoc in the markets. Recycling options for plastics are limited, but 15 US paper mills are coming back online to handle brown paper. Glass recycling remains an issue, with limited markets for recycling. The state is allowing the recycling of glass for road fill and other uses.
- The state has put together a useful website to help educated residents and businesses about waste reduction and recycling – [recyclesmartma.org](http://recyclesmartma.org).
- The state is giving incentives to towns that allow one 35-gallon container per week for waste disposal. The state will provide attractive incentives to towns that adopt such

systems. Also, systems that are pay-as-you-throw or modified pay-as-you-throw are encouraged due to their proven effectiveness in reducing waste.

- The state also provides incentive grants for part-time recycling inspectors to enforce regulations and reduce contamination. Lynn hired an inspector as was able to reduce its contamination rate from 40% to 15%. Chelmsford's contamination rate is around 6% - quite low due to manual collection and direct visual inspection of recyclables.
- For business recycling, Julia mentioned that the state is offering incentives to municipalities that enact private hauler regulations that require haulers to offer recycling. Julia mentioned that she was willing to provide more information on the regulations in a separate session with the Committee.
- Julia also mentioned that the town may want to consider a waste audit, to determine the amount of trash that is placed curbside. Such an audit would provide an estimate of the percentage of households that may be affected by a more restricted 35-gallon waste limit.

### **Coordinator's Report**

Nick noted that any warrant article for a plastic bag ban would need to be completed by the first week of August to meet deadlines for the fall Town Meeting.

The most recent monthly recycling figures were not yet available.

The flyer is about ready for publication. There will be an additional household hazardous waste day in October, due to the strong demand at the April event. The October event will be half funded out of the solid waste budget. In addition, the Minuteman hazardous waste collection facility in Lexington will be closing July 20<sup>th</sup>, ending the town's participation in the program. There was some consideration that a shredding event should be cut to pay for household hazardous waste, but it was decided to retain the two shredding events.

The October waste day could be held the last weekend of October at the DPW Alpha Road facility.

It was agreed that there should be all drop-offs should occur twice per year. The two shredding days could also include metal drop-offs and some additional items for collection. The Committee could reach out to vendors such as Offbeat composting to participate in the event, and the Committee could provide a promotional table. Nick said that it would not be advisable to hold a recycling event that would not incur additional costs, due to the existing demands on the solid waste budget.

Aaron mentioned that he'd like to suggest some changes to the committee charter for the next meeting.

### **Outreach**

The committee has signed up for three publicity events at the Farmer's Market this summer. The first event for June will be canceled. The other dates are August 3<sup>rd</sup> and September 7<sup>th</sup>.

## **Plastic Bag Ban**

Aaron discussed several points to support a town plastic bag ban warrant. These included:

- Several states (NY, VT, HI) and numerous municipalities in MA have enacted bans, including Westford, Lowell and Tewksbury.
- The cost of reusable bags is limited and the Committee has a number of reusable bags to provide to residents free of charge.
- There needs to be a response to the objection that the ban is an unneeded regulation.
- Plastic bags create contamination issues for recycling facilities
- Most retail businesses are prepared for plastic bag bans.
- Microplastics pose a threat to health and the environment.
- The presentation of town representatives needs to be concise and should not exceed 10 or so slides.

**Next meeting** is scheduled for July 11<sup>th</sup>.

Members compiled a list of **action items**, which included:

- Cynthia will look into a composting vendor to attend one of the Farmer's markets events.
- Aaron to review committee charter.
- Jocelyn to re-send Google docs link to members
- Aaron to work on warrant article