

Brookline Solid Waste Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes for January 24, 2023

Minutes submitted by Mary Litterst

Meeting came to order online via Zoom at 6:33pm and adjourned at 8:51pm.

Attendees:

SWAC Members: John Dempsey (Chair), Deane Coady, Mary Litterst, Kathleen O'Connell, Clint Richmond, Susan Rittling

SWAC Members absent: Ravin Bhatiar

DPW Staff: Erin Chute Gallentine, Kevin Johnson, Alexandra Vecchio, John King, Katie Weatherseed, Chaimaa Medhat

Members of the Public: **Carla Benka, Pam Roberts, Charlie Young, Paul Hsieh, Perry Grossman, Sheera Hefter**

Welcome & Public Comment Section:

Chairman Dempsey asked for comments, there were none.

Minutes of December 12, 2022:

Ms. Coady moved, Ms. Rittling seconded, and the Minutes were unanimously approved with 2 edits (spelling correction/Casella & capitalize/STEM) requested by Mr. Richmond.

Discussion of Reusables with Sasha Palmer:

Ms. Palmer, Director of School Food Services, Public Schools of Brookline, presented on the status of incorporating reusables system-wide and goals as well as an update on school composting.

Ms. Palmer noted the School Department had received a grant for a new position to support her and the reusables transition roll out. She asked SWAC to participate in the interview panel and to refer possible candidates to her. While that position is being filled Ms. Palmer said that she continues to phase in the reusables and dishwasher use and to slowly implement the reusables transition in phases.

She said that all cafeteria position job descriptions include operating a dishwasher. Currently, all elementary schools except Pierce have dishwashers installed & are ready to go. Lincoln is now nearly 100% reusable and will be using updated waste

stations within the next month. She noted that challenges remain at the High School where, for example, Tappan does not have the right type of dishwasher.

In addition to the need for additional on-site staff, Ms. Palmer noted that challenges vary across sites and include lead time to install dishwashers, layouts that disrupt the flow, mismatch of supplies and equipment (e.g., some trays too big to dump compostables); expense of alternatives (e.g. undyed compostable trays), lack of more compost-friendly food packaging, and lack of universal 'back of the house' composting. Ms. Weatherseed said that DPW staff are discussing the possibility of making back of house composting available to all public schools in September 2023.

Several committee members complimented Ms. Palmer's progress under trying circumstances.

Presentation, Discussion & Vote on Sanitation Fee Increase for FY24:

Commissioner Gallentine presented the *Hybrid-Pay-As-You-Throw 2024 Program Rate Proposal* in anticipation of bringing it before the Select Board. She requested comments and additions.

She reviewed recent annual Sanitation Service collection & cost statistics, explained her desire to return to the 75% user fee/25% property tax funding goal, and detailed 4 scenarios for increasing (8.5%, 10%, 12% and 15%) the FY24 PAYT cart fees, favoring the 8.5% rate which would be the first increase since FY21. She also proposed introducing fees for disposal of mattresses (\$55), white goods (\$20) and bulky goods (\$10) picked up curbside.

She explained the components of her "Full Cost" accounting method, noting that Sanitation Service costs for FY24 are projected to increase 15% from FY21, from approximately \$4.8 to \$5.6 million. For budget planning purposes, she said she is estimating annual tonnages at 8500 for Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) and ~5000 tons for recycling. She also noted that the number of households using curbside waste collection services has increased since 2020.

The Commissioner noted that the FY23 Sanitation Service budget is operating in a deficit with a 70/30 funding split (and it excludes Federal holiday and Amnesty Week overtime). She explained that absent a fee increase, the FY24 budget would reflect a 65/35 split.

She explained that her FY24 budget request includes Town funding for the Zero Waste Manager position which is currently grant funded and a new Code Enforcement Officer position (related in part to rodent control), as well as community drop off sites for composting. She also noted that the proposed White Goods fee does not cover all disposal costs of hazardous components and will still be subsidized by the Town and rate payers.

Discussion and comments included adding a slide to explain why the Town subsidizes 25% of the costs, and another to detail the cost for pick up and disposal; how the tonnage costs of recycling and MSW disposal have moved closer together since FY21; value of changing split to make up for past or to anticipate future loses; complexity of totter fee formulas & desire for equitable charges; code enforcement; impact of reducing contamination in recycling pick up; balancing of program goals in tight fiscal environment; fees for drop off vs curbside pickup; adding fees for tires drop off; viability & form of Amnesty week; Compost Pilot; override components; maintaining continued commitment to the Zero Waste Framework; pros/cons of increasing fees more than 8.5%.

Mr. Richmond moved; Ms. Coady seconded a motion:

To approve the fee structure as presented by the Commissioner of Public Works on January 24, 2023, as follows:

Increase a minimum of 8.5% up to 10% maximum in all PAYT totter fees & Commence a PAYT model for special pick-up items as follows:

- Mattresses at \$55.00
- Special and Bulky Items at \$10.00 per item
- White Goods/Electronics at \$20 per item; and

To allow the Department to adjust Special & Bulky item fees based upon size, handling, cost, and hazard as appropriate within the \$10-\$20 fee.

All voted in favor of the motion when the Chair polled the members. Additionally, the Chair agreed to write a letter to the Select Board in support of the proposed fee increase.

Committee members thanked the Commissioner for the detailed presentation, and she thanked them for their time and support.

DPW Report: John King/ Chaimaa Medhat/ Katie Weatherseed

Because of the hour, the Chair shortened the agenda and asked the staff to send the members the Quarterly Tonnage Update as Ms. Palmer's presentation included a school composting update.

Hybrid Meeting Update:

Ms. Weatherseed explained that the Town is moving to a Hybrid Meeting format beginning 3/15/23. The protocol starting with SWAC's April meeting will enable some to attend remotely but will require a physical quorum of members and one DPW staff member present. The latter will be Ms. Weatherseed or occasionally in her stead Mr. King or Ms. Medhat. The meetings will be held in the Public Health Building, most probably the Denny Room, which has technical capabilities and room for distancing.

DPW Report:

Ms. Weatherseed announced that Casella staff Bob Capadona and Erin Banfield will be joining us at our next meeting and reporting on ACR trends and related issues.

Mr. King reported that 69 mattresses have been collected to date, 47 clean and 22 contaminated (including wet). Currently, the Town does not have enough heated space in which to dry out wet mattresses as preferred by the Commonwealth.

Mattresses that cannot be dried must be disposed of as waste.

In response to Ms. Coady's question, Mr. King has advised residents not on Town Sanitation Service to ask their property manager or a private hauler to dispose of mattresses.

As part of rodent control efforts, Ms. Vecchio reported the Town is starting to switch out public open-top trash barrels (VS-42s) near the High School with lidded 95-gallon black trash carts until more BigBelly compactors are available. At \$7k each the latter are expensive and converting all receptacles across Town will take time. In the discussion of BigBelly pros & cons, Ms. Vecchio noted that currently they are the only option that is fully rodent proof. They have a tendency to jam when not used properly.

Mr. Dempsey reported his positive experience using the BigBelly composting bins and associated app while visiting in NYC and suggested it might be a good option for the Town's public housing. Ms. Weatherseed mentioned that the staff is arranging for a demo as they consider options for the drop-off sites in FY24.

Mr. Richmond moved; Ms. O'Connell seconded to adjourn the meeting; passed unanimously at 8:51 pm.

SWAC Meetings/Minutes Rotation

Ravin 3/23

Clint 4/23

Susan 5/23

John 6/23

Deans 7/23

Kathleen 8/23

Mary 9/23