

## **Brookline Solid Waste Advisory Committee**

### **Meeting Minutes for May 5, 2020**

Submitted by John Shreffler

Meeting called to order at 6:33 P.M. online via WebEx

**Members present:** John Dempsey, Susan Rittling, Clint Richmond, Mary Litterst, Deane Coady, John Shreffler, Marga Dieter.

**Staff:** Ed Gilbert, Tom Seegar, Kevin Johnson (Highway Division).

**Public:** Thomas May (Save that Stuff and Brookline resident).

**Handouts:** Agenda; Minutes from 2/25/20; April Totals, April Totals Extract, Casella Invoice Introductions and Preliminary discussion as to online meeting procedures.

Minutes from February 25, 2020, meeting were reviewed. Approved as written, all in favor.

- DPW report – Ed Gilbert reviewed the solid waste and recycling numbers for March and April: In March Solid Waste was up 2.49% and in April it was down 4.64%. While household contributions were up, institutional contributions were down, especially due to the closing of schools. Recycling was up 10.22% in March and was up 7.04% in April, with a noticeable increase in contamination in both months due to quarantine. DPW is taking informational measures to ameliorate the contamination problem. It isn't possible to field inspectors at this point.
- Ed Gilbert discussed DPW measures to combat Coronavirus. Crew members are wearing masks and gloves. Vehicles are being cleaned twice daily and a special machine fumigates the vehicles, paying special attention to the vehicle cabs. At this point, there have been no DPW personnel infections. Temperatures are tested twice daily. Personnel are currently divided into two groups to deal with effects of possible quarantine.
- Kevin Johnson discussed contracts and budget. For recycling, the Town budgeted for FY 2020 \$360,00 and it looks like the Town will be \$70,000 short by end of Fiscal Year. The current Contract expires on June 30 and negotiations are underway with Casella, with the Town currently awaiting their response. It's currently unclear if they'll be successful. The Town may ask for a one year extension. Going out to bid is a lengthy process and will take longer due to virus. The Town would prefer to reach a 3-5 year contract renewal agreement with Casella. Ed Gilbert noted re recycling that April price per ton dropped. John Dempsey noted that corrugated cardboard price is going up. Ed agreed and noted that due to drop in oil prices, it's cheaper to use new plastic rather than recycled product. There ensued further discussion re OCC/cardboard. Ed noted that the Town could pull OCC/cardboard from the contract and that Casella wouldn't object. Clint Richmond suggested negotiating a shorter contract length to preserve flexibility, which was generally agreed would be possible.
- Ed Gilbert then discussed the status of curbside composting. The Town put out a request for proposal seeking to reach an arrangement with a composting company in which the Town would promote the company in return for a good price. Residents could continue using their current company if they

wanted, as the Town-selected company wouldn't be exclusive. Black Earth was the only company to respond and the Town got an excellent price offer. Thomas Segear then discussed the specifics. Black Earth currently has 368 customers. They collect 7 tons of food waste per week. They currently charge \$2.41 per week. With new agreement, the weekly price will drop to \$1.92, with currently-enrolled customers automatically receiving the new price on their next bill. Ed Gilbert noted that the agreement needs publicity but Black Earth's manager is recovering from Covid so things are on hold. After his return, the Town intends a roll out, possible at the DPW Sorting Station or at Town Hall, handing out carts and starter kits. At present, according to Kevin Johnson, the Town Coronavirus Task Force forbids any public events, so the rollout can't happen until after Memorial Day. The agreement is firm, and both new and current subscribers will get the new rate. It's open to any Brookline resident. After rollout, Black Earth will deliver carts and startup kits. The agreement has been on the Town website for two weeks. Deane Coady queried whether the Town could come up with an alternative drop-off center to the Teen Center. Ed Gilbert responded that the Town wants to move away from the free drop off model due to the heavy logistical burden and emphasize the Black Earth model. Clint Richmond then noted that Public Housing residents should be considered for special treatment due income equity considerations. Ed Gilbert noted that the Brookline Housing Authority might have funds and suggested having a discussion with its Director. Clint Richmond suggested inviting Director to our next meeting to discuss composting, with John Dempsey noting possible discussion on recycling. Clint Richmond then noted that Bootstrap is restarting which will alleviate food waste overflow at the Teen Center.

- John Dempsey then moved on to several items of note. Simple Recycling has restarted. The is needs publicity. Ed Gilbert discussed bulk waste. Town isn't currently collecting bulk waste. Next week, during Trash Amnesty, the Town will collect bulk waste but collection should to be arranged by phone. However, the Town knows that is unlikely and will collect bulk items not called in. The Town will pick up items regardless. Kevin Johnson noted that this arrangement was the will of Town Meeting. Ed Gilbert discussed possibility of an outside Sharps box.
- John Dempsey queried whether the discussion addressed his concerns re the budgetary implications due to change in trash behaviors during April. Clint responded that we're over the budgetary hump, with Simple Recycling restarting and the drop in numbers due to school closing. Discussion then segued to the last topic: Future of Solid Waste/Recycling.
- John Dempsey began by noting that the Big Belly containers are showing increased recycling contamination due to ease of insertion into recycling versus fear of contamination by touching handle on trash side. Possible fix: \$800 foot pedal. He also noted the increased presence of plastic bags on the street due to relaxation of single use bag bans and the resurgence of containers as litter due to closing of redemption centers in stores. Tom Segear noted that strict redemption centers are still open but are geographically distant, requiring auto travel. Susan Rittling noted takeout is only in plastic. Clint Richmond noted that the Department of Health has suspended plastic packaging bylaw to give businesses help during the crisis and suggested a letter to the Select Board suggesting education measures. John Dempsey requested a motion for such a letter to the Select Board to be drafted by Clint Richmond re bylaw education, hoping for compliance, not enforcement. Motion made, seconded, and passed unanimously, with the Chair to submit the letter on behalf of the Committee on SWAC

stationery. Marga Dieter then noted that Whole Foods no longer allows customers to bring in their own reusable containers. John Dempsey responded that it's his understanding that there's a public health law governing this. Clint Richmond added that it's at the store's option to protect customers and staff from Covid infections. The same rationale underlies the suspension of plastic bag bans, the ban on reusable bags, and the suspension of fees for single use bags. Mary Litterst then asked if our Committee should shift to an information focus re PFAS. John Dempsey drafted a letter to the Select Board to this effect after our last meeting urging that the Select Board to set up a Task Force to examine PFAS issues re education and purchases as well as /town sales of items with PFAS. Clint Richmond added that he and Claire Stampfer had discussed PFAS with several Town departments prior to Covid and Public Health was receptive but Covid intervened. A discussion as to the timing of PFAS discussion ensued. John Dempsey was in favor of initiating a discussion as soon as possible.

**Adjournment:** 7:41

**Next meeting:** June 2, 2020