

Brookline Solid Waste Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes for June 2, 2020

Submitted by Deane Coady

Meeting called to order online via WebEx at 6:30 P.M.

Committee members present: John Dempsey (chair), Mary Litterst, Susan Rittling, John Schreffler, Clint Richmond, Deane Coady, Marga Dieter

Staff: Ed Gilbert, Tom Segear

Public: Amie Lindenboim (former member of SWAC), Mary Sabolsi

John Dempsey opened the meeting with a review of the virtual meeting protocols

Minutes from May 2, 2020, were reviewed and approved.

1. DPW report - Ed Gilbert and Tom Segear

- May 2020 report:

- Solid waste is down 721 tons from last year (Why? Not picking up at the schools and other public buildings)(but not enough to reduce the number of trucks)

- Recycling down 13 tons from last year

- ACR went up about \$5, but tonnage is less so paid about the same

- Will probably get close to 8,000 tons for the fiscal year

- Bulky trash pickup has resumed

- Hazardous material drop off to resume July 7 (working on PPE protection for staff and new rules for residents: e.g. no getting out of the car; staff to lift hazardous materials out of one's trunk).

- Collected 18 more tons of MSW than usual during Amnesty Week

- Mr. Gilbert reported that the DPW investing in new app and software to better manage and disseminate information to Brookline residents. Re-Collect is the company. Anyone can download the app to their phone: easy access to information such as trash pickup days, hazardous materials schedule and locations, curbside composting information, Simple Recycling information, special campaigns, amnesty week, etc. July 1 is targeted start date. High user rate reported in Boston and Newton. Ed and Tom to meet with company representatives to develop an advertising campaign for the rollout. \$6,000 annual fee for first year of operation. To check it out, download the app "Trash Day" (Boston's app) to see how it works. Brookline will get its own name for the app/software.

The app/software will be available and free to all residents, no matter private pay or town trash service. SWAC will be asked to help and advise on what to publicize, etc.

- No information yet on the budget. Kevin Johnson is managing this for DPW. All departments have been asked to cut 20%.

- Curbside composting pick up through Black Earth Compost: Due to the pandemic, DPW is unable to provide the bins and starter kits to those who sign up. Hopefully this will start in July. In the meantime new enrollees are directed to pick up their starter kits at one of two volunteer locations. If it's burdensome for a new customer to pick up the starter kit at a volunteer's home, Black Earth Compost will drop off at the new customer's home (this was Marga Dieter's experience). Information is posted on the town's website. Nearly 500 residents have enrolled to date. Marga was asked where she keeps the bin - she reported it's kept in the basement and shared by one other family in her building. Marga reported no issues with smelly food waste - bins do latch tightly. Deane keeps hers outside.

2. Review Letter to the Select Board about encouraging/enforcing sustainability by-laws for takeout restaurants.

-Clint Richmond shared a letter he drafted for the Committee's review. A discussion ensued as to how the letter should be worded, what message is important to convey. Should we be encouraging the DPH to educate and advocate for the sustainability by-laws? Should SWAC work with DPH to promulgate the by-laws - they are likely very understaffed during this crisis. John and Clint agreed to rewrite the draft letter to be positive in tone and appreciative of the tremendous work in containing the spread of COVID that the DPH is undertaking. Furthermore, the focus of the letter should be on encouraging the DPH to inform and educate all take out establishments of the sustainability by-laws, including the relevant materials and information they will need to purchase foodware sustainably. We face a pandemic and a climate crisis - the sustainability by-laws cannot be ignored! Kudos to Clint for bringing this issue to the committee's attention and writing the first draft!

3. Discussion: Should private haulers be required to offer compost collection?

- such a requirement may increase compost pick up in large apartment buildings.
- Ed doesn't see this requirement as a hardship for either the large haulers such as Casella or the smaller haulers.
- Ed will look into adding this stipulation to the application permit form and report back at our next meeting.
- Currently approximately 30 private haulers have permits to haul away trash/recycling in Brookline.
- Add to the stipulation: aerobic and anaerobic methods are acceptable but no mingling with sewage (e.g. Greater Lawrence Sanitary District Treatment Center would be unacceptable).

4. Review letter about inaccurate information on scratch tickets (Lottery or DEP?)

- John Dempsey reported a conflict of information: Recyclopedia recommends putting lottery tickets/scratch tickets in the trash. Bob Cappadona at Cassella says they are recyclable.
- Clint reports the tickets should probably not be recycled: zero value and they contaminate the good stuff (newspaper, office paper, and cardboard).
- Mr. Cappadona will look into it and get back to us.

5. Discussion: Plastic recycling: have we been duped? Are we unwitting enablers? Are we at an existential moment?

- Many believe the public has been duped by the plastics industry for decades. Only 14% of plastics collected are in fact recyclable. The rest is junk.
- Clint and John scheduled to speak at CAB meeting next Monday on this topic.
- First plastic coke bottle introduced in 1978!
- #5 plastics: there is a market in NE; Cassella has taken plastics #1-7 even though there is very no use for #3, #4, #6, #7. This is an important discussion at a future meeting. What should be SWAC's position on plastics recycling?
- Clint asserts all plastics are toxic so none should be recycled!
- Is incineration a better option than landfill? Ed says it may be a moot point since landfills have reached capacity in MA.
- Ed suggested another field trip to Covanta incinerator. Check the website. They aim to eliminate toxic gases from the burning process with scrubbers and stacks, etc., but how effective is this? And where does the CO2 go??

6. Other business

- Discussion about supporting the schools' use of dishwashers as a way to reduce single use throwaway items and to support Brookline's efforts to move toward zero waste.
- Deane agreed to draft a letter for SWAC's review at the next meeting.

Next meeting: July 14, 2020 at 6:30pm