

Draft minutes of Solid Waste Committee regular meeting, Aug. 12 2021

Submitted by Jack Cushman, Chair, 8/16

Members present: Jack Cushman, Alex Thorngren, Andrew Scherer

Public members present, Claudette Brochu (Selectboard), Carolyn Frye, Linda Cook, Neil Fulton (Greater Upper Valley Solid Waste Management District)

Cushman in person at Tracy Hall, others via Zoom or telephone.

All decisions of committee are by unanimous consensus (committee members constitute a quorum so all we do must be unanimous)

No changes to the posted agenda.

Previous minutes approved.

No public suggestions for new agenda items.

Committee agreed it still wants to establish a textile processing stream, per memo attached to meeting agenda, but is deferring this arrangement because of temporary vacancies in the offices of town manager and director of public works.

Scherer noted that eventually we must ascertain for certain that an arrangement would not conflict in any way with existing solid waste contractor agreement; Thetford has found no conflict in a similar arrangement. Frye asked about a possible one day collection of textiles but the proposed contractor's arrangement is for multiple bins and a monthly collection. One day event probably doesn't work with their approach. Brochu suggested discussing matter with transfer station employees. Scherer said he had not, although employees have ideas for rearranging the transfer station for flow and efficiency, but he would check with them on textile bin placement. Cushman said this should await interim or permanent DPW director.

Committee briefly discussed the renewal of Norwich agreement with Lebanon waste management; this agreement was presented to Selectboard the previous evening, and is described in Selectboard minutes.

Scherer and Fulton described the arrangement, which was supported and is about to be finalized. Norwich residents will have option of applying for use of Lebanon transfer station. Scherer noted that application would be on line. Fulton said that in general the agreement as approved is a significant improvement. It also will provide better tracking so our town will know how much waste from Norwich is going to Lebanon without going through Norwich. Brochu noted that since people have been using Lebanon in the past this will not likely have a significant effect on finances of the Norwich transfer station.

Next: Cushman noted that Article 36 Task Force has presented schedule to Selectboard for developing recommendations to phase out direct municipal use of fossil fuels. Cushman, who chairs the task force, noted that it is charged to communicate with all relevant committees, commissions and officials. Noting the focus on fuel use by town equipment, some of which is used at transfer station, and urged committee members to be mindful of the need to phase out use of fossil fuels there over the coming years and decades. Task Force is collecting ideas and information.

Next: Cushman asked Scherer to manage our discussion of agenda involving public education and similar themes.

Scherer said it makes sense to have public messages on the listserv for such things as recycling. The public is not completely familiar with the rules, and they do their sorting at home, so we need to deliver info to them at home.

Big example: cooking glass, mirrors and the like contaminate the glass stream and reduce the price we collect for recycling glass. Committee wants to have a presence among townspeople on this.

Cushman asked if there is anything to preclude committee members from communicating this information via the listserv without public notice and discussion. Brochu indicated that there was not (although committee members should avoid having all three involved in one communication, as this might be construed as an open meeting law violation).

Scherer is going to start with a listserv notice on the glass recycling issue. Thorngren will review it for proofreading and editing. Other items might include batteries, washing recyclables and the like. Public suggestions are welcome.

Committee plans to build on this educational effort, with possible signage and the like.

Linda Cook said some people are helping with plowshare reusables table, and having this presence there is keeping the area more organized and less cluttered. In the book building there are volunteers trying to help get older or inappropriate materials out, and staff is working on the issue to help out. With no attendant or fulltime volunteers people just dump inappropriate materials there.

Cushman said he would try to write a listserv memo describing the protocol for used books.

Frye said that posters with what's allowed and not allowed for each container can be very effective. They take time to make and have to last in the weather. Scherer asked who makes the decisions about what is OK and not OK for signs. Do we have to consult Casella? Cushman suggested adding signage as a future agenda item next month. Brochu noted that laminated posters probably would fit in the transfer station budget as long as the communications loop is

handled correctly. Cook asked if Neil could check with Casella if they could update clearer posters. Cushman put this aside until next month's discussion.

Scherer moved on to the special events schedule for the year, monthly theme focusing our messaging, notifying of special collections, educational events, etc. Cushman shared the draft schedule offered by Scherer, and after a discussion of what the best order of events should be, Scherer said he would put the list into order so committee could approve it expeditiously.

Monthly themes may include holiday wrapping paper/Christmas trees; electric tool collection; glass education; brush and woody yard debris; composting; transfer station ticket renewals; paint; batteries; paper shredding; composting; lightbulbs/batteries. Cushman made suggestions for reordering the list; Scherer will make some edits and present a final schedule.

Thorngren suggested that "collections" should be in colder months when people want to drop and run. Demonstrations and education might be better in warmer weather. Andy suggested education be done via email; Cushman suggested via Zoom. The point is to decide on themes for a given month.

Frye asked if it might be difficult to do paper shredding in December given the weather. Cushman said we could ask the companies doing the shredding what the best timing is. Scherer will contact them and make sure there is money in the budget. Brochu said by our next meeting there may be some idea of how personnel changes will go. Once we finalize schedule there will hopefully be someone to send it to. The transfer station has a budget and if shredding is not prohibitively expensive it should work. Cushman noted it doesn't have to be on a day when transfer station is open.

Next, Scherer has been communicating with Ham Gillette of GUVSWMD for composting education. Ham has had lots of interest and attendance in other towns, previously in person and also on line. Scherer will work on fixing a date. Events at Norwich library have filled the room. We will invite him to next meeting.

Committee, with consensus of other members, deferred our discussion of what is the ultimate fate of materials like plastics that we put in the recycling stream.

Next we turned to helping committee better understand revenue and expenditures from transfer station. Brochu said town report data should be arriving soon. She noted we do have materials previously provided to committee. She said if committee has items to suggest to the budget we should come forward with them.

Thorngren said we need to establish a baseline and see what the number is that we want to see going up or down. Cushman asked if there is a deadline for bringing our ideas forward; Brochu said department heads have been asked when department heads have to hand numbers in. Budget is not finalized until early January, but it's best not to come in at last minute.

Next, Fulton noted that the town of Hartford, which uses coupons for its transfer stations, plans in future not to take any trash from people other than residents, as of June of next year. Looking forward, we ought to think about what impact that might have on demand for Norwich transfer station. This is a matter for our future consideration.

Cushman asked why a Norwich resident would go to Hartford -- closer? Brochu said she had sometimes used Hartford for recycling because it is open five days a week. (Have to buy a sticker.) This will probably end.

By unanimous consensus, committee adjourned at 8:13.