

DRAFT MINUTES, Solid Waste Committee, 12/9/2021

Committee met in person at Tracy Hall (Cushman) and by Zoom.

Committee members Cushman, Thorngren, Scherer, Blake and Terry attended. Committee works by consensus, not roll call votes.

Public member Linda Cook attended by phone. One member of the public later reported difficulty logging in on Zoom, but said she would try again at the next meeting.

Meeting started at 7:25 after delay establishing Zoom call and turning on new public kiosk in Tracy Hall.

Draft agenda approved by consensus with revision to discuss Alex Thorngren's role on committee.

Minutes approved by consensus with adjustment to reflect that Tracy Hall was closed at last month's meeting because November 11 was a holiday. Also change for typo to show correctly that cost of signage at transfer station will be very "low" instead of "long."

Thorngren is considering when to step down from the committee, his goal has been to help get committee get underway and will think over the timing during the holidays and fill us in at the January meeting.

Cushman noted that Linda Cook has expressed willingness to join the committee. Another member of the public may also express interest formally. Shifting numbers of members will make it easier to maintain quorum at public meetings.

Scherer noted that there is no formal budget or line item for committee projects, but that any potential relatively small expenses are possible through more routine budgetary expenditures approved by town managers as they may arise.

Scherer also suggested that we "pair off" into non-quorum working partnerships to make progress on ideas and projects when we have ideas, especially for mere communication and education of the public. Consensus is that this is a good approach now that we have a larger committee with a quorum of three.

Cushman said that he would like to work in a pair on signs, notices and public reminders on transfer station do's and don'ts. For example Cushman will help a partner to produce some signs, leaflets, stickers and whatnot.

Listserv communications and social media strategies are other examples. Should we have our own web site somehow?

Pairing can be sorted out informally outside of meetings, as a matter of scheduling and coordination (not policy setting or budgetary decisions), we suggest by consensus.

Scherer has circulated a memo or two on social media considerations, as fodder for discussion. Considerations include that the best approach is to have one way communication, without public comment, to reserve it for government speech only.. The worry is if a site becomes a two way conversation it needs to be moderated and kept in line with OML constraints.

Town has a policy, committee members are to update their understandings of this. There is not really a social media platform for making public announcement. But recreation department has a well developed set of tools and has not been told not to communicate via social media.

Cushman said he thinks that policy can only obtain public comment is in meetings or in correspondence with the committee. The list service is not a public comment channel. We ask that communications come at our public facing channels. On the other hand we can publicize things anywhere. That's outgoing communication, and we can use any platform. On inbound comments we need to be strict.

Blake said a Web layout can include a comment function for formal communications including comments which are directed to the appropriate inbox.

Cushman said this would direct comments to an appropriate inbox.

Scherer asked if this would have to follow rules for "correspondence." Cushman said as long as we do our business in public that we don't need to be terribly concerned about communication channel. Cushman noted that we don't have a committee email address and probably will need one.

Consensus is that working in public and transparently is primary goal, and that if we make errors the remedy is just to correct our processes.

Scherer asked if we have enough content to require a public facing web site. Nor do we need to reinvent the wheel and supplant what is already at GUVSWMD, for example.

Cushman said we are going to be developing materials, and it would be nice to have a place to assemble it all, as people have a lot of questions about how to recycle and dispose of materials.

Blake expressed interest in working on such a web site with social media to point public to changes. Terry added support for using Web in this way, including cross-posting to other useful links and aggregating info that already exists. Scherer chimed in support, and consensus is to move in this direction.

There is a web site to be found by Googling <Town of Norwich Transfer Station> and Cushman and Scherer suggested that we might rebuild or rewrite it for committee purposes. It is maintained by the town. But members who tried the link out during our meeting sometimes received error messages.

We should ask the town if this page could be adopted by the committee. Consensus is that we want to move in this direction but we have to think it through. Cushman promised to do more research.

Cook also asked whether we could use Norwich Times. (Cushman noted that Conservation Commission does so, paying a small fee for each column in that newspaper.) This might be financed through the town budget, even just twice a year.

Scherer also mentioned that Hamilton Gillett of the GUVSWD has raised the idea of sending out a survey to transfer station users; perhaps this could be done via a properly structured Google device with responses handled appropriately. Or use a similar app via Survey Monkey or the like. Or we could just go there and stake out the area on a Wednesday or Saturday.

The library is also a venue for Ham to take questions and talk to the public.

Paul at the transfer station also has insights to share, and we should be sure he is welcome at our meetings if he is so inclined.

Blake said on her visit to the transfer station, it appeared that one source of confusion was that signs say "you can't put this here" but don't direct the user to the appropriate alternative disposal channel.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:25 pm.

Filing of draft minutes was inadvertently delayed, but we are making every possible attempt to be quicker as well as complete.

Jack Cushman, chair