

**Ad-Hoc Curbside Trash Committee**  
**Thursday, January 12, 2023, 6:00 PM**  
**Veterans Room**  
Minutes

1. Call to Order 6:00 PM
2. Roll Call: Councilors Marketti, Steeves, Health Inspector Wasiuk, Citizen Members Buxton, Gregoire, Lataille, Grenier. (Absent Daniel Grabowski, excused). Also in attendance MASS DPW Regional Recycling Coordinator Irene Congdon and Town Manager Michael McCall on GoToMeeting Video Conference.
3. Consider and approve Curbside Trash Committee minutes of December 8, 2022. Approved
4. **Update on Curbside Collection 2024 website.**

**Discussion:** IT Director Victor Roule updated the committee on the website. He reached out to Civic Plus on the process for the Curbside domain name and will link it to the town's website page when ready. The initial cost in \$500.00 and annual cost \$175.00, to be paid by the recycling grant. Kevin Buxton asked that the Curbside Advisory Committee be updated on the website as it still shows the previous committee. He also asked about updating the meetings posted on YouTube. There were also questions about when the survey mailer would be going out? Mr. Wasiuk said it would be going out with the town census.

5. **Update on Regional Meeting with 75 Communities on December 15, 2022.**

**Discussion:** Ms. Congdon said she is the Regional Recycling Coordinator for all of Central Mass, and together with her counterparts in Western Mass, they met with 175 communities to discuss trash issues. She said there is a group of 10 communities that will be changing their garbage contracts in the next 2 years. They see what other trash contracts look like so they can compare contracts between municipalities.

Councilor Steeves asked if any of the contracts include profit sharing? Ms. Congdon said there is and she spoke about recycling collection costs, processing costs and then haulers are selling the recyclables at the back end, so the companies are making money. She said the State has information concerning this on [recyclesmartma.org](http://recyclesmartma.org). Kevin Buxton spoke about the multiple issues with recycling, transfer stations and scheduling pickup.

Ms. Congdon said the meeting went well and the next meeting coming up on January 19, 2023, they will be going through the RFP process. She asked if we have hired a consultant? Mr. Wasiuk said we hired Michael Scipione, a consultant from Weston and Sampson.

6. **Review/discuss RFP draft template.**

**Discussion:** Mr. Wasiuk said the RFP is in the works and Anna Smith has been working on it diligently with the Town Manager. Mr. McCall said he worked on one of these RFPs in his previous community. His plan is to have this set by early February.

Kevin Buxton asked if there is a scope of service for this RFP? McCall said Anna developed the scope of service. Ms. Congdon said it hasn't changed since it was given out in May, and she gave an outline of the proposals. There was further discussion about the scope of work, illegal dumping and the responsibility of the hauler.

**7. Review/discuss billing options for a Curbside Garbage Collection Enterprise Fund with Town Manager Michael McCall and/or Finance Director Karen Harnois.**

**Discussion:** Ms. Harnois spoke to the billing that would be associated with an enterprise fund for curbside trash collection. She said that any revenue that is brought in through an enterprise fund, such as water and sewer, would be self-sustaining. Any revenue we bring in should cover the expenses.

Ms. Congdon explained that the issue is the assessor's office does not have the staff to handle billing. Ms. Harnois said we would need to look at adding staff, which would add to the cost. Ms. Congdon said that could be included in the enterprise fund.

Mr. Wasuik asked if there is an option to hire a private company to do the billing? Ms. Harnois said that is a route we could take, but then there would be a fee for the company to do the billing.

Councilor Steeves asked which way would make more sense, an enterprise fund or general fund? Ms. Clemence spoke about making sure residents pay for their trash collection. She wanted to hear more about a plan and the best way to pay for it.

Ms. Harnois explained that the easiest way to pay for the program would be through the General Fund. Her concern with an enterprise fund would be enforcement and what happens when people don't pay? She wanted to be careful that the enterprise fund doesn't get subsidized by the general fund.

Kevin Buxton asked if the billing for a trash enterprise fund could be included in with the billing for water and sewer? Ms. Harnois said that is something we could consider.

Councilor Steeves asked how that would work if a resident does not currently have water and sewer, such as himself, and no water and sewer bills. Mr. Gregoire thought that those residents would get a "utility" bill and the only thing on the bill would be for trash.

Ms. Congdon asked what the process was for starting an enterprise fund, and if there was a timeline? Mr. Gregoire asked who would vote to create the enterprise fund, the Town Manager or the Town Council? Ms. Harnois said it would be the Town Council. She also said working through her office and the Town Manager, they would bring it forward through a Council Subcommittee.

Mr. Lataille spoke about the job of the Health Director and the benefits of an enterprise fund as opposed to taxes.

Chair Marketti asked Ms. Harnois that if an enterprise fund system for trash was created, would that mean that a proposed override for curbside collection would not have to go on the ballot? Ms. Harnois said an enterprise fund would be fee based, so it would not have to go on the ballot. Councilor Steeves asked about the cost for municipal service, and who would pay for it with an enterprise fund? Steeves thought it was important information for us to know. Ms. Harnois said she would have to take a look at that.

Ms. Harnois finished up the discussion by saying residents would have to pay for trash pickup at municipal buildings anyway, so would it make sense to separate it out, or would we include it in one bill? She didn't know if there was an advantage one way or the other.

Chair Marketti brought up a point put to him by other residents, that if trash service is based on a user fee, then residents or businesses who don't use the service would not pay for municipal garbage pick up.

#### 8. **Review/discuss funding with Irene Congdon, MassDEP Recycling Coordinator.**

**Discussion:** Ms. Congdon discussed the option of a Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) program. Residents would pay for colored bags to be used for their garbage to help off-set the cost of the service. She ran through the data for tonnage amount in town, and looking at our numbers per household, she predicted that using purchased bags would drop the total of trash disposal by 30% in town in one month. She explained the advantage of already having the carts for trash disposal in town. Many communities do not have the carts. Ms. Congdon said that the town throws away approximately 5,000 tons of solid waste a year. With PAYT program, we could reduce it to 3,400 tons per year.

Ms. Congdon then spoke about the cost of the bags. Some communities charge 25¢ per bag, while others go as high as \$1.50-\$2.00 per bag. She also explained that she has 155 other communities that use this program and they report there is not a lot of illegal dumping. There is a problem with illegal bulky item dumping, and that's something we have to work on keeping people aware of where to take stuff and who to call. She also spoke about composting and food waste. She predicted food waste disposal will change as more and more food is being delivered and in containers. She spoke of companies who provide composting of food waste service in Southbridge.

Kevin Buxton asked about a mandatory requirement for residents to participate in a trash disposal service, not making it easy for them to opt out.

Ms. Congdon said according to state law, a resident can opt out of the program, but the town can require that they show proof of a trash disposal service with a licensed company. Some people get creative and use their employer's dumpster to dispose of their household trash. That is considered an illegal transfer station and is not permitted. So it's important to have a legal document for residents to provide proof that their trash is being picked up legally.

Mr. Pulawski asked about permitting small businesses to get their waste picked up. He also asked about the numbers being given for the town's average per household. Ms. Congdon answered that the average household produces 1,575 pounds per household in town. Mr. Pulawski also asked about the percentage of recycling that is not recyclable? Ms. Congdon said that Anna Smith did a lot of work on that, and she believed it is about 10%

Ms. Clemence asked about educating the residents and she spoke about our diverse community. She also spoke about the illegal dumping of mattresses around town. Ms. Congdon asked that pictures be taken of illegal dumping. Clemence then asked why residents would be allowed to opt out? Ms. Congdon said there is a Mass State Court case that said that any flat fee that is a separate bill, can be opted out of, but you can require a piece of paper to make sure people are doing it legally.

Mr. Laitille said that the bags are supposed to be clear but that is not happening in town. He felt that it will be hard to enforce a pay as you throw program. He also spoke about the mattress disposal problem in town.

Councilor Steeves asked about the percentage drop, how would that effect financing? Ms. Congdon said we would have to be conservative on our costs. Steeves asked what that would do for bag fees? Ms. Congdon said we would not want to go over \$2.00 per bag. Several committee members asked about the bag fees for low income and seniors on fixed income? Ms. Congdon said that the cost is about the same as a cup of coffee.

Ms. Grenier asked if there is a number on what it is going to cost per household per quarter? Ms. Congdon said it depends on what the operation will be.

Ms. Congdon also spoke about the cost of bags. She said some people think the bags will cover the whole program, but that is not the case. There will still need to be a supplement for the cost either with a flat fee or taxes. The bag cannot cover the whole cost of the program.

Mr. Laitaille asked if there is a start up cost for the bag program? Ms. Congdon said there is a start-up fee. She also said that when residents purchase bags we would have revenue coming in, approximately \$700,000 to \$800,000.

**Added Discussion:** Mr. Gregoire presented a plan for a flat fee program. He worked on the program on his own based on the number of units in town. Under his plan, based on a sliding scale, the more units you have the cost per unit goes up. His plan is a toter only estimate, based on a \$2 million estimate for the program. Mr. Gregoire then went over his numbers and asked that we look it over and discuss it further at the next meeting.

Committee members continued to discuss the plan and there was a general discussion about our trash problems and ideas for compliance.

9. Next meeting date. January 26, 2023 6:00 PM

10. Adjourn. 7:46 PM

Respectfully submitted by Chair Marketti