

Portsmouth Solid Waste/Recycling Committee
Town Hall, 2200 East Main Road, Portsmouth, RI 02871

Minutes for Meeting Number 124 on November 8, 2017

Meeting called to order at 7:02 p.m. David Mower announced his resignation from the Solid Waste/Recycling Committee beforehand. The committee accepts Mr. Mower's resignation with regret.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Theodore Pietz, Tom Gorski, Michelle McGaw, Claudette Weissinger, Mike Eyre

GUESTS: Raymond Antaya

MEMBERS ABSENT: Paul Barandiaran (unexcused)

MINUTES:

- Approval of committee minutes for October 11, 2017 postponed until January 10, 2018 as minutes are still being drafted.

CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED:

- RIRRC Municipal Customer Monthly Summary: Portsmouth – October 2017

Reports:

1. Chairperson Report.
 - a. Attended Town Council meeting 10/23/2017.
 - i. "Old Business" Item 2. "Award Transfer Station Contract with C&D and ABC to Lowest Qualified Responsive Bidder."
 1. Elizabeth Pedro questioned tonnage aspect of RFPs as there is no drive-on scale at transfer station.
 2. Paul Kesson dissenting with Vinagro as the selection stating "we need to do our homework".
 3. Town Councilors Paul Kesson, Elizabeth Pedro, and David Gleason voted against Vinagro (lowest cost bidder) seemingly to protest Lawrence Waste Services being disqualified for bidding per load in violation of the RFP. Mr. Pietz stressed that RIRRC's rates per town's contract are based on tonnage and the RFP was very clear that prices were to be submitted in terms of tonnage.
 - ii. "New Business" Item 1. "Putting the Transfer Station Sticker Fee in the Tax Base."
 1. Citizens Ms. Patenaude and Ms. Abbott argued for this item, equating transfer station to a private/public school.

2. Keith Hamilton stated he “would not disagree with sticker as a tax line item”.
 3. Per Ms. Patenaude’s notes, “In 2006 town removed fees from taxbase as curbside folks did not want to ‘double pay’.”
- b. Conducted experiment with WasteZero Middletown PAYT 30 gallon bag. Placed 6 bricks (roughly 35 pounds of weight) in PAYT bag and lifted bag multiple times (recorded a video) and posted 24OCT2017 to Portsmouth Times’ Facebook page under newsfeed post “JR Vinagro wins Portsmouth transfer station contract”.
 - c. Stated regardless of the PAYT vote, the issues surrounding trash disposal in Portsmouth is a likely 2018 election wedge issue and potential Town Council candidates should be polled for their understanding of and stances on solid waste/recycling issues.
 - d. Per the committee’s bylaws, committee elections are held January of odd-number years, therefore next officer election (Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary) shall be held January 2019.
2. Recycling Coordinator Report.
 - a. RIRRC monthly summary.
 - i. No recycling loads were listed as being rejected due to contamination. RIRRC’s “Municipal Customer Monthly Summary” now contains a row “REJECTED RECYCLING...” which lists a row of “0” (tons) for the values spanning the previous year.
 - ii. Contaminated mattresses or box springs require a \$50 fee per unit (mattress or box spring) to dispose of. Clean and dry ones are free to dispose since can be recycled when placed in the mattress container.
 1. Michelle McGaw voiced concerns about thoroughness of the mattress process. How to monitor if a mattress is deemed unrecyclable? Who makes this assessment? If need to buy a pass for \$50 fee, can it be bought online and proof of purchase brought to the transfer station guard? What happens if it rains after the drop (otherwise clean/dry mattress no longer recyclable?).
 2. Committee discussed whether the mattress/box spring fee is to be paid at the Transfer Station or at Town Hall beforehand. Expressed reservations regarding any fees paid at the Transfer Station in light of the Recreation Department’s Sandy Point Beach collections allegedly being embezzled. Desire voiced for an online based solution to supplement existing methods.
 - iii. Brian Woodhead, Richard Rainier, and Mr. Antaya attended a transfer station walk-through and met new Vinagro employees. Interior monitor billet to assist and facilitate residential process will be staffed by 2 people (to split the hours).
 - iv. Swap area at Transfer Station no longer present.

1. Mr. Pietz noted craigslist.org “free” section a great way to get rid of items that may had been left at the swap area.
 - v. The period of 5 straight months of “0” (tons) listed in RIRCC’s monthly summary for Portsmouth’s compostables was investigated. Stated this was due to ongoing contamination leading to loads being placed in the “Municipal Cap Wastes” row.
 1. Ms. McGaw stated that Vinagro employees have told her to place yard waste in the general refuse “pit”.
 2. Mr. Gorski expanded on this point, stating if Vinagro is incorrectly causing residents to change their behavior, then may risk altering resident behavior for a very long time until behavior is relearned.
 - vi. Mr. Gorski stated that dehumidifiers will be taken at E-Waste events (next one is November 11th at Portsmouth High School). National Grid thought to provide \$30 rebates, “e-waste” thought to be a \$10 fee (so a \$40 net difference if go the rebate route). Stated that the whole process of what to get rid of where can be “daunting”.
 1. Mr. Pietz stated National Grid provided him a \$100 rebate for an old refrigerator (that National Grid contracted to remove) in early 2015.
 - vii. Ms. McGaw stated there could be more opportunities to streamline the message, consolidating the information from various sources, such as rebates, RIRRC announcements, Recycling Coordinator messages, and tips how to recycle successfully (for example, do you leave the bottle cap on or off the bottle?). The “Portsmouth Recycles” Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/portsmouthrecycles/> could be help list this information. It is thought that Barbara Ripa (the Town’s Executive Assistant) manages this page, committee will confirm.
- b. Kristen Brown (WasteZero) presentation 10/17/2017.
 - i. No Town Councilors attended.

Old Business:

1. Language for peddling application to include a checkbox inquiring whether peddler will provide a recycling option for their on-site generated waste.
 - a) <http://www.ecode360.com/12278946>
 - § 274-7.1 Special event peddler's license [Added 1-11-2016 by Ord. No. 2016-01-11B].
 - § 326-30 Public events.

Worked under “New Business” Item 1 “Town Facilities Waste Assessment”.

New Business:

1. Town Facilities Waste Assessment

- a. Ms. McGaw: “One way to increase recycling rates is to have a system where the town would pick up recycling materials from some of those locations in an effort to improve our recycling rates. I spoke with Brian Woodhead (DPW) about this who I do not think would be a fan of this idea. This would mean increased workload for his employees. But a greater concern for him is recycling bins where people throw in trash. Once trash and recyclables are mixed together his team does not separate them out due to risks involved. ... For example, if they picked up only recyclables at the senior center or at CFP Community Hall those venues are indoors and someone who runs the facility needs to ensure that items are separated out properly.”
- b. Mr. Pietz: Need to remind the overseers of the venue(s) that recycling is mandatory per law since 1996.
- c. Ms. McGaw: Need to streamline applications for town facilities, no consistency. Town’s website should have a “1 stop shopping” portal/dashboard listing all properties and associated links to initiate the process of utilizing said town facility.
- d. Mr. Antaya stated the committee should facilitate the process as much as possible. Committee can evaluate the various facility requests and/or licensing application(s) to ensure consistency with current Portsmouth code (namely recycling aspects) to move to a more uniform venue application process.
- e. Noted by committee if DPW vehicles are bringing the trash for various venues to the transfer station while utilizing WM for recycling, it negatively impacts Portsmouth’s recycling rate.

Action taken: Mr. Pietz will update the working spreadsheet and provide a copy to the committee. Different venues assigned to differing committee members, to report back to the committee January 10, 2018.

2. Upcoming PAYT Town Council Vote

- a. Ms. McGaw made a motion, with Mr. Gorski seconding ***“In order to facilitate collection of bulky items, or any fee based item at the Transfer Station, direct the Town to expand its site www.officialpayments.com to allow acceptance of fee-based item payments.”***

Motion passes 5/0.

- i. Debate included that folks may want to dump fee-based items on a Saturday but Town Hall would be closed. Folks could then print off the purchase receipt (would include name and address) to give to the Transfer Station guard.
- b. Mr. Pietz stated town needs to require WasteZero provide a PAYT bag color not readily available on Amazon (yellow, light purple, blue, light green, pink, black). Require a bold stripe or pattern distinctive to Portsmouth to prevent fraud, or in large block letters print a bag serial number, serial numbers from a vehicle should

be expected to be within a certain range, this would allow monitor to sniff out “sticker sharing” if the sticker fee remains independent of the tax rolls.

- i. TC needs to institute \$50 bag/item “fine” to show it is serious.
- ii. Utilize photographs/screenshots from closed circuit cameras.
 1. Ms. McGaw: Warning letters need to be written to have a paper trail. Pull/revoke stickers.
- c. Need to advertise or state charges for bulky items (and tags) or provide amnesty days like Middletown (4x/year) for program to be successful.
- d. Targeted Sticker Price Reduction
 - i. 58.8 Waste Zero bags = \$100 (considered within the range of expected usage). Beware RIRRC’s tipping fees per ton MSW will increase from \$39.50 to \$47 on July 1, 2018 (and was only \$32/ton in 2016-17) so should be conservative with number.
 1. Reduce need for second monitor at the station to build a financial cushion since distinctly and brightly colored PAYT bags can be monitored via a video feed (Google Nest, etc.)
 - a. Added benefit to monitor actual activity of contractor to investigate complaints, accidents, etc.
 2. PAYT if Middletown’s rates, based on projections presented 25AUG2017 (Middletown rate as comparable) town will realize \$48K/year (2018) combined cost savings/RIRRC rebates.
- e. Mr. Gorski: PAYT program controversial in Fall River, MA. Elaborated stating dynamics in Fall River, MA differ from Portsmouth, RI as many buildings contain weekly renters. Trash seemingly gets abandoned in the street. Landlords bearing brunt of the situation.
 - i. Ms. Weissinger replied that transient apartment dwellers seemingly not as likely to be recyclers.
 - ii. Mr. Antaya noted that private haulers are supposed to pick up recycling but overall seems to be little “teeth” (enforcement).

3. Sticker Fees in Tax Rate

- a. Layout of the transfer station seen as a limiting factor for recycling rate.
 - i. Per Mr. Antaya, approximately \$1.2M to run the town’s trash program. Per Town’s Finance Department, paying for the trash program via taxes would be “progressive” as amount of taxes paid is tied to value of home. There is the added complication that the tax formula may contain built-in “caps”.
 - ii. Ms. McGaw inquired regarding providing a (free or reduced cost) “Recycle only” Transfer Station sticker program to increase Portsmouth’s recycling rate (would drive up numbers in order to trigger RIRRC fee rebates). Also inquired regarding Public Facilities recycling to drive up recycling percentage.
 1. Consensus was that current layout of the transfer station would make it difficult to ascertain “recycle only” folks visit just the

recycling pit. It was noted the “recycle only” sticker could be a different color.

2. Public Works bins at public areas could be seen as satellite recycling bins. Currently Public Works vehicles not thought to require dump stickers to utilize transfer station (even though incurred cost of Transfer Station usage by DPW vehicles are borne among only the 3,500 households using the transfer station vice the entire town, and DPW benefits the entire town).
 - a. Will DPW vehicles use PAYT bags or have exemption built in while conducting official business?

b. CON:

- i. Taxes should pay for items that folks actually want (roads paved/plowed, police, fire, schools).
- ii. Punitive to the less mobile and working families that have no choice but to use private curbside pickup. Concept would work best if there was townwide curbside as the primary solid waste/recycling disposal option.
- iii. One-time accounting/legal charges possible.

c. PRO:

- i. Will eliminate the effect of “sticker sharing” once and for all. However, noted that will still need stickers printed (per RFPs town estimates cost at \$3K for 4K residents for Transfer Station).
- ii. Allows folks moving to Portsmouth after the start of the year to not feel ripped off that there is not a prorated option for stickers.
- iii. Gives town greater flexibility regarding trash management.

d. Committee “informal” straw poll:

- i. Ms. McGaw: Nay. Town’s budget is already very tight.
- ii. Ms. Weissinger: Yay. Would allow for deductions in income tax bills for home owners.
- iii. Mr. Gorski: Nay. Enterprise fund created to pay for the program.
- iv. Mr. Eyre: Nay. Keep tax rate stable. Transfer station already at capacity, if move transfer station model to taxes, user base will likely rise and no room for additional users.
- v. Mr. Pietz: 60/40 Nay. Does not like idea of folks that have no choice but to use private curbside to be forced to “double pay” but likes idea of ending “sticker sharing”.

4. Private Curbside “Co-op rate”

- a. Mr. Pietz: Daniela Abbott of Portsmouth’s Conservation Commission researching. Mega Disposal has been running advertisements in Portsmouth Times with incentives that effectively make the rate \$35 a month for 95 gallon waste, 95 gallon bin for bi-weekly recycling and unlimited yard waste (with \$25 account seasonal suspension option), contract termination if moving, military

deployment, or Town switches to curbside pickup. \$15/small items, \$25 large items (appliances, TVs, swimming pool liners, mattress, box spring).

- b. Mr. Antaya: Private vendors are not to solicit at Town Hall. Town Code Article V "Recycling" section 326-29 "Licensed haulers" is on the books. However, no application process to become license or known fee for vendors to comply with this section of code is known, and no currently existing haulers have been known to become licensed per this section. Estimated around 3,300+ households utilized haulers since around 3,900 stickers for the Transfer Station were sold last year.
 - i. Waste Management estimated to service 721 households in Portsmouth (9.36% of estimated 7,700 households in town).
 - ii. Mr. Gorski: Not understood how would pertain to one-off vendors compared to an ongoing service contract based vendor. Various one-off vendors exist, such as "1 (800) GOT-JUNK" and Waste Management single use bins sold at the Middletown, RI Home Depot.

Mr. Eyre motioned to adjourn, with Ms. McGaw seconding. Approved 5/0. Meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Next regular meeting committee meeting scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on January 10, 2018 at Portsmouth Town Hall.