

Solid Waste and Recycling Advisory Committee Meeting
Minutes

Wednesday December 14, 2022
(Via zoom) Meeting 124 Orchard St., Watertown

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 5:39

Present: , (via zoom): Anya Pforzheimer, Leslie Evans, Alexandra Somers Lahr, Russ Arico, Leslie Evans, Judy Fallows, Tom Watkins (via phone): Eileen Ryan, Eileen Zubrowski, (Guest) Joan Gumbledon

Previous Minutes: To be reviewed at our next meeting

Actions

a. Review of Republic Contract document

Update on Republic negotiations – Greg and Anya will be meeting with Republic (2/8).Hauling contract is pretty standard.

b. Review of member's ideas and suggestions for contract additions

MRF = Materials Recovery Facility

Republic now owns Greenworks (a MRF) and Republic takes our single stream recycling to Greenworks

Wheelabrator is a waste to energy facility, that's where Republic hauls our trash including bulk items.

The Committee does not have additional suggestions for contract additions, we're still learning.

Question: Concerned that a lot of the recyclables don't really get recycled, how do they sort through it and what happens to stuff that's not recycled.

Anya - Republic picks up our recycling, we have 4 trucks on the road, 2 for trash and 2 for recycling. If there's plastic bags or non-recyclables in the green bin they will not take it. This is why we need to do more education, otherwise things that don't belong in the green bin get put in trash at the facility (MRF) as contamination.

Question: Do we recycle plastics number 1 to 7?

Anya - That's not a good way to figure out what gets recycled, 1 2 and 5 tend to be recycled - something that holds it's shape. But "hard plastic" can't be put in the bin they can be recycled but they have to be taken to the Recycle Center.

What about "clam shells" which can't be recycled but get put in the bin, also most of what's in there - metal, paper, cardboard - are recycled

Coated paper (like milk cartons) are not recycled because there's no market for it, nobody wants it, currently. Also way it is important to focus on promoting and buying products made with recycled materials.

Question: What are the problems that Republic sees that we need to work on to get people to be able to sort their waste more accurately, so it doesn't end up in the trash. Could you maybe put a sign on the inside of the lid of bins, to remind people what doesn't get recycled, like plastic bags and Styrofoam.

Audits of contamination in green bins might be a useful thing to do to find out where more education is needed, also to find out the components in our waste - how much is paper vs plastic vs glass vs metal.

People moving into Watertown may be used to different rules for what goes in the bin and the trash. This would be a place to make sure education is happening, could work with landlords.

- How can we identify these folks (landlords, new residents) so we can let them know?
- How do we dispose of rugs? Some can get cut up and put in black bins, but some rugs are too big. Republic was not picking up rugs but we're now able to schedule rugs as a bulk item, similar to a couch or a chair.

After the contract is negotiated, will there be different things that need to be on the calendar before the new year? Probably not, most changes were started before the end of 2022

Bulk burnable items are currently taken to Wheelabrator waste to energy facility, residents will have to pay for these bulk items like a couch or chair or large rug

Audit for our trash? Boston found that 40% was compostable, can we do that? It would be good to get a baseline now so we can find out if our educational efforts are working. Homeowners get a quarterly tax and water bill and in there are some communications, that might be one place to put out new information.

Ideas for committee to focus on:

- We could bring examples of confusing items to educate people at events or at the recycle center, encourage people to ask about how to dispose of specific items
- Could we have a swap area at the recycle center (Swap Shed) that could be staffed by volunteers? They have this in Arlington, they have a huge setup in Wellesley, Lexington too

We noted that he felt trash audit could be an invasion of privacy and some people don't shred their private correspondence. These audits would be done at a large scale and would not record any personal identifying items.

Plastic bags that get recycled at the grocery store are generally used for Trex lumber.

c. Decide on a new standing meeting date (decide next meeting)

Discussion

- a. New ideas for additions to the FY24 contract negotiations**

Adjourn: 6:28pm

Next Meeting: February 15, 2023