

TOWN OF HAMILTON
HAMILTON and WENHAM Boards of Selectmen
SEPTEMBER 6, 2011

The Hamilton and Wenham Boards of Selectmen met at Hamilton Town Hall at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 6, 2011 with Hamilton Board of Selectmen Jennifer Scuteri, David Carey, Marc Johnson, Jeff Stinson, Jeff Hubbard, Town Manager Michael Lombardo and Finance Director Deborah Nippes-Mena present.

Solid Waste Program Discussion: Save Money and Reduce Trash

Town Manager Michael Lombardo provided additional information on conceptual overview for evolving the current Waste Reduction Program to a form of pay-as-you-throw or Save Money and Reduce Trash (SMART) program.

New to this discussion was further description of financial impact to ultimately save money and potential for tax reduction with the SMART proposal.

Lombardo restated that current recycling programs in both communities use same hauler and are source separated so this process along with one free barrel system lacks incentive to encourage people to recycle more. He noted that the current Waste Reduction Program is not producing results and recycling percentage rates in Hamilton went down in 2010 from 30.3 to 28. Disposing of solid waste is costing Hamilton taxpayers from \$52,000 to \$90,000 annually.

In addition, the current structure of the Curbside Organic Recycling program is not cost effective or sustainable as a voluntary fee-for-service program. If the collection contracts were combined between Hamilton and Wenham this program could be expanded town-wide but a pay-as-you-throw component is required to ensure participation.

The opportunities with a full-blown PAYT is the hauler would provide a weekly single stream or comingled recycling program (where recycled items are separated at the waste disposal facility) and Town-wide organic recycling (which would mesh with Mass. DEP's aggressive recycling goals for the state). This SMART proposal would reduce solid waste and increase recycling.

Lombardo presented two scenarios: one with a fee for each bag of refuse disposed of weekly along with no fee single stream weekly recycling and weekly curbside organic pickup; the second included one free bag of bi-weekly refuse collection together with no fee weekly single stream recycling and weekly curbside organic pickup.

The more convenient single stream-recycling program would have financial incentives for greater waste reduction along with the opportunity to divert organics from a curbside program to an anaerobic digester at the Hamilton town landfill with a goal of 50 to 150 tons processed daily at the facility. The digester could be used by other communities and would provide electricity and biogas resulting in a revenue stream for the Town.

Lombardo reiterated that Hamilton has applied for a \$20,000 Green Communities grant from DEP that would pay for a fatal flaw study on proposed program. Study would analyze details including road traffic impact resulting from use of anaerobic digester.

Preliminary estimates are that the annual gross receipts from the anaerobic digester could be in excess of \$1.5 million minus operating and construction costs. Revenues would be placed in the waste enterprise fund and used to offset the cost of the SMART program.

In response to inquiry about whether or not the SMART program would be another tax or permanently reduce the tax rate, Lombardo reiterated that the funds in the waste enterprise fund from bag revenue would offset the cost and the municipalities' tipping fee cost to dispose of solid waste would be reduced. He noted that this is a shift in how trash removal is done and paid for.

Also discussed was ways to remunerate the messy and offensive nature of storing organics in preparation for curbside pickup.

Lombardo said the business model demonstrates that Hamilton's landfill site is a good location for the anaerobic digester to accommodate the North Shore. It would be publicly and privately owned. He also said due to the State's favorable position on organic recycling the Town as a Green Community would likely be eligible for grants from a related funding pool.

Resident Bill Dery presented numbers on his belief that the proposed PAYT would be more expensive for taxpayers than existing per household cost of trash pickup paid for from real estate taxes.

Due in part to the limited meeting time, the Wenham Selectmen wanted to have more conversation about the SMART proposal.

Scuteri noted that 134 communities in the Commonwealth had successfully implemented a full-blown PAYT program and were realizing recycling percentage rates as high as 60%. She acknowledged that it does require residents to make a lifestyle change.

In response to resident Bob Gray's concern about illegal dumping of trash if the community no longer offered to pick up one barrel of trash for free, Lombardo said the SMART proposal was researched extensively and the data does not support abhorrent trash disposal.

Finance Director Deborah Nippes-Mena described how the town of Boxford has a full-fledged PAYT with a recycling percentage rate of 42%. She noted that many Boxford residents compost organics on their properties.

Discussion was about potential for savings from the SMART program, as much as \$72,000 a year, if the two towns combined trash removal processes. Town officials noted that the proposed SMART program trash removal cost per household would not be based on real estate value but on resident behavior relative to trash disposal and amount of recycling done.

SMART Working Group member Marc Johnson scheduled an education workshop on the SMART/PAYT proposal for Friday, September 9 at 9 a.m. at Hamilton Town Hall.

After this discussion the Hamilton Selectmen conducted their Board meeting.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Dooley, Minutes Secretary

ATTEST: _____

Clerk