

Eliot Pay-to-throw Q & A (updated 8/21/2013)

Q: How can I minimize what I pay for Pay-to-throw bags?

A: Think about the 3 R's – Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.

Reduce – when possible, reduce the amount that you consume or when purchasing items, buy the item with less packaging.

Reuse – think of ways to reuse items that you have instead of buying more. Try reusable bags instead of “paper or Plastic”. For gently used items that you no longer need, drop them off at the swap shop. Start composting your food waste – either at the transfer station or your own back yard composter. Food waste is approximately 25 % of our trash by weight and composting is a great way to reuse.

Recycle – become familiar with all of the items that can be recycled at our transfer station and do your best to separate your recyclable materials from your trash.

Q: Has the Solid Waste/Recycling (SWR) Committee considered going to Single Stream?

A: Yes, and we decided against it.

Single stream certainly does appear to be a simple solution, everything in one container. It is an option to consider for communities with no current recycling program. They can quickly go from zero recycling to 20-30% in a very short time.

However, for communities with an established recycling program like Eliot, it is usually not a good option. We currently receive revenue from the sale of our recycled material. The amount that we are paid varies with the product and the current markets. Last year the town generated revenue of \$122,535 from sale of recycled material, clear bags and bottle/can redemptions (page 43 of Town of Eliot Audited Financial Statements included in 202nd Town Book). Currently communities using single stream are getting in the range of \$0/ton to paying up to \$35/ton to get rid of the material.

So if Eliot went to single stream, under current market conditions, we would lose our current revenue and may have to pay to get rid of our material.

An additional note – at single stream sort facilities the amount of residue that can't be recycled, usually due to contamination, is in the range of 5 – 25%.

Q: It is kind of confusing sorting all of the different kinds of plastics. Can the town collect all plastics in one container?

A: The answer is similar to the answer to the above single stream question.

By sorting the different plastics, the town currently receives revenue of approximately 33 – 37 cents/pound for #2 natural plastics, 12 – 17 cents/pound for #2 colored and #1 plastics, and 0 – 6 cents/pound for rigid and mixed plastics. It is easier to collect all plastics in one container, however, revenue would be significantly reduced because the lowest price would be received for all of our plastic.

Q: What revenue did the town receive last year from the sale of clear bags and recycled material?

A: As discussed in the first question above, last year the town received revenue of \$122,535 from the sale of recycled material, clear bags, and beverage container redemptions (page 43 of the Town of Eliot Audited Financial Statements). This revenue varies each year and over the past several years has been in the range of \$80,000 - \$120,000 annually.

Q: During the 6 month trial period for pay-to-throw, residents will develop good habits. Can the town then stop collecting fees for the trash bags?

A: The SWR committee feels that 6 months is not a sufficiently long enough period to establish long term habits.

If the trial period is successful and Pay-to-throw continues, the bag revenue will be used to offset the amounts that need to be raised by property taxes.

Q: Where will the bags be sold and when will they be available?

A: Bags will be sold in Eliot at The Meet Market, Route 236 Variety and Grill, Eliot Agway, and the Irving Circle K. Bags will also be sold at the Portsmouth Market Basket.

Bags should be available at all locations by August 16th.

Large bags (30 gallon) are \$2 each and come in rolls of 5 for \$10

Small bags (15 gallon) are \$1.25 each and come in rolls of 10 for \$12.50

Q: Can the SWR Committee do a “how to backyard compost” presentation?

A: Yes, if there is enough interest. We will try to determine interest and then schedule a meeting.

Q: Is it OK to crush cans?

A: Yes.

Q: What can go in the green food waste bags?

A: All food waste, including meat, fish, bones, dairy products, soiled napkins and paper towels, etc. See flyer at transfer station. Flyer is also available on town web site.

Green Bags are available at the transfer station recycling building – ask attendant.

Q: Can something be done about the smell at the food waste container?

A: Yes. During the pilot, the container was being picked up every 2 weeks. Now that the program is open to all residents, the volume is much higher. A second container will be added and will be picked up weekly. The major reason for the smell is that some people are dumping their food waste into the container but not using the green bags. Please use the green bags and tie off the bag. Don't use other plastic bags. The green bags will decompose and contain the smell.

Q: Can we recycle rags?

A: Yes. Put rags in a plastic bag to keep them dry and put in Salvation Army box.

Q: A recent purchase contained large pieces of Styrofoam as packing. Does the Styrofoam need to go into purple bags?

A: No. Put any large pieces of Styrofoam in a clear bag and put in construction & demolition (C & D) container (next to scrap metal container) at no cost. Small pieces of Styrofoam like meat trays and “peanuts” will go in purple bags with trash.

Q: Can we continue to use clear bags?

A: Clear bags can be used up until the end of August. Starting September 3rd, only purple pay-to-throw bags can go into the trash hopper at the transfer station.

Q: What about kitty litter?

A: No change. Continue to deposit in designated container.

Q: What about disposable diapers?

A: They will go in purple bags.

Q: Can we recycle aluminum foil that has been used for cooking?

A: Foil that is washed off can be included with the aluminum cans.

Q: Will schools and other town departments follow the same requirements?

A: Other town departments will follow the same requirements. The Public Works Dir. is working with the schools to determine the best way to proceed.

Q: What will be the impact if the transfer station is only open 2 days per week?

A: The number of days per week that the transfer station is open will likely be affected by the budget process and the vote of the residents. The 6 month trial period for Pay-to-throw will start September 3rd regardless of the results of that vote.

Q: How much will my taxes go down?

A: The SWR Committee does not control the town's budget process. However, the revenue from the sale of Pay-to-throw bags will be documented by the treasurer and will be included with revenue from the sale of recycled material that will reduce the revenue that must be raised through taxation.

Q: Does the town have recycling bins for sale?

A: Yes. Blue bins are available for sale at the transfer station and at the town hall.

Q: Does the town have stackable bins? I have only found colored stackable bins in sets of 3 and they are expensive.

A: No. However, grey stackable bins (HDX 18 gal. Hopper Bins) are available individually at Home Depot.com for about half the price.

Q: What do we do with lids?

A: Lids must be removed from containers. Currently, if lids are small, they go in with trash. If lids are 2 inches in diameter or larger and have a recycling symbol, they can be recycled with the misc. plastic.

Q: Where does our recycled material go?

A: After collection, our recycled material becomes a commodity that is shipped to various end users where it becomes a new product. When possible our material is reused within the United States. Unfortunately, for many materials, there is insufficient capacity within our country so it is shipped to other countries.

Q: What services are being provided by Waste Zero?

A: Waste Zero has helped the committee put together Pay-to-throw impact projections as well as information for the resident information meetings. During the 6 month Pay-to-throw trial period, Waste Zero will:

- 1) Make the purple bags with the Eliot logo
- 2) Distribute the initial supply of bags to all businesses that will be selling the bags
- 3) Process bag reorder requests and ship new bags weekly
- 4) Invoice businesses and collect payments
- 5) Distribute revenue back to the town

If the Pay-to-throw program continues beyond the 6 month trial and we agree to continue receiving services from Waste Zero, they will provide additional community support including a web site, (800) number, and ongoing community education and other services.

Q: Why will Pay-to-throw bags not be sold at the transfer station?

A: There are several reasons:

- 1) There have been complaints about traffic delays at the transfer station. Elimination of the sale of bags is an effort to improve traffic flow.
- 2) If due to budget constraints, the transfer station is only open twice per week, the traffic congestion could become more of an issue.
- 3) The sale of Pay-to-throw bags at the transfer station would require the handling of much larger amounts of cash and the corresponding difficulties.
- 4) The businesses are selling the bags to support the town and improve the availability for the residents, more hours per day and days per week. They receive no income from the sale of the bags. Please support these businesses.