

Solid Waste / Recycling Committee (SWRC) Input to Selectmen
August, 2015

At this year's Town Meeting, some questions were asked about operations at the Transfer Station that may not have been answered in sufficient detail. It was apparent that the SWRC missed an opportunity to inform the Eliot residents of what has been accomplished. In an effort to correct this oversight the SWRC decided to present some information to the Selectmen and then decide how to inform the residents.

In 2012, Eliot disposed of 1089 tons of general trash (municipal solid waste (MSW)) which was a reduction of 585 tons (35%) from the 1674 tons generated in 2000 when the SWRC started. At Town Meeting held in March 2013, the town appropriated \$373,048 for operation of the Transfer Station (Art. 25) and \$37,060 for Transfer Station employee fringe benefits for a total of \$410,108. That included \$104,800 of service fees or trash disposal fees. The SWRC and Public Works Dir. felt that the cost of operation of the Transfer Station needed to be reduced in order to reduce the tax burden for Eliot residents. The committee volunteered many Tuesday evenings working on potential program changes while formulating a comprehensive plan that could produce the desired long term benefit for the town. The changes being proposed required thinking outside the box and taking risk that others might not approve, however, change was necessary to produce the long term positive effects that the committee felt were possible.

In 2013 the committee proposed three new programs that were approved by the Selectmen and implemented – a kitchen food waste collection program, Pay-to-throw and collection of miscellaneous plastic. The committee looks at these three new programs as a supplement to the existing recycling program, creating a significantly more comprehensive approach to waste management in the town. (The town was already recycling cardboard, misc. paper, tin and aluminum cans, #1 and #2 plastic bottles, glass bottles, scrap metal, yard waste, motor oil, used books, and clothes for Salvation Army.) Each new program was implemented separately to give residents time to adjust to the changes, however, the committee looks at these new programs as integral components of an overall comprehensive program. Pay-to-throw provides incentive to use the food waste and misc. plastics programs and the food waste and misc. plastics programs help to reduce the volume of material that the town needs to pay for in disposal fees. These programs also create a system that is fair for all residents. The good recyclers no longer subsidize those who choose not to recycle. Residents that are good at recycling and composting pay very little for their trash disposal. Those who don't choose to do as good a job of sorting their trash pay their fair share.

Implementation of these programs put Eliot out in front of most other local communities when dealing with MSW. We were one of the first two communities in Maine to implement a municipal food waste collection program. Eliot certainly was not the first to implement Pay-to-throw, we joined a long list of communities that have successfully implemented this program. However, the committee is not aware of any other local community that has implemented both Pay-to-throw and a food waste program. As a result of this comprehensive program, the volume of MSW collected at the Transfer Station in 2014 was 329 tons, a reduction of 760 tons (70%) from 2012.

Other municipal governments are recognizing the need for the types of programs that Eliot already has in place. Massachusetts recently made separation of organic waste mandatory for businesses and

institutions that generate 1 ton per week or more. Vermont has implemented mandatory state wide Pay-to-throw and will start food waste collection by 2020.

It will be much easier for Eliot to keep these successful programs in place than to stop them now and restart them at a later date when required by government mandate.

In addition to the 3 programs previously discussed, the Public Works Department has implemented many other changes that have contributed to these savings. Some of the additional cost saving measures, that Eliot residents may not be aware of, include:

- 1) The Public Works Dir. identified that Waste Management was not complying with the previously negotiated contract for waste disposal costs (tipping fees).
- 2) Subsequent negotiations resulted in a new contract with EcoMaine and a savings of approximately \$30/ton in tipping fees.
- 3) Purchase of a used truck so that the town can do our own hauling for additional cost savings.
- 4) The hydraulics system on each trash compactor was upgraded so that more material can be loaded into each container, reducing the number of trips to Portland, reducing transportation costs.
- 5) The Transfer Station is now open only 2 days per week.
- 6) There is now a swap shop at the Transfer Station.

The amount appropriated this year for operation of the Transfer Station was \$270,631, a reduction of \$139,477/year from the \$410,108 two years ago. With estimated revenue from recycling of \$76,000 and estimated Pay-to-throw bag revenue of \$62,000 (both from current 18th Warrant Art.), the net cost for operation of the Transfer Station is \$132,631.

Some of our neighboring communities are spending considerably more – Kittery has budgeted \$661,867 for operation of the solid waste Resource Recovery Center and York has budgeted \$1,475,000 for solid waste disposal. The comprehensive solid waste program in Eliot allows our tax dollars to be used for more constructive purposes than filling a hole in the ground.

In summary

As a result of the comprehensive waste management plan in place in Eliot over the past 2 years:

- 1) The volume of general trash has been reduced by 70%
- 2) The annual budgeted amount for operation of the Transfer Station has been reduced by \$139,477
- 3) The SWRC and the Public Works Dir. recommend against action that would disable any part of the current comprehensive waste management program. Such action would be the first step toward dismantling of a very effective program.

James Tessier, Chairman

Joel Moulton, Public Works Dir.

Bud Moynahan

Phil Lytle

Donald Webber

Connie Carignan