



**Minutes of the
SOLID WASTE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TOWN OF PEMBROKE, NH
October 17, 2023 at 6:30 PM**

Committee Members Present: Wendy Weisiger, Sally Hyland, Gerry Fleury

Staff: David Jodoin, Town Administrator. Bob Fanny, Pembroke Public Works.

Excused: Sandy Goulet

Casella Waste Systems Representatives, Brian Groshon and Martin Golubski

I. Call to Order:

Chairman Wendy Weisiger called the meeting to order at 6:32pm.

II. Approval of Minutes – Meeting of July 18, 2023

Gerry Fleury made a motion to approve the minutes of July 18, 2023. Sally Hyland seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0.

III. New Business:

Chairman Weisiger took the agenda items out of order and skipped ahead to the discussion with Casella.

The committee welcomed Brian Groshon and Martin Golubski from Casella Waste Systems and thanked them for attending as requested. It was noted that discussion topics had been provided in advance and Ms. Weisiger asked the gentlemen from Casella to respond to the topics list.

Mr. Groshon stated that they recognized many of the topics on the discussion list from a similar meeting held a year earlier, so they understood the drivers for this meeting and they welcomed back and forth dialogue on the topics. In recognition that cost was a key issue, he distributed a sheet of containing a historical chart of Average Commodity Revenues, (ACRs) from 2017 until a year ago, and disposal rate for Pembroke for the last year. The Pembroke chart listed Trash Disposal Rates by month, inclusive of the new contract rates which took effect in September of 2023 and the monthly recycling rates, ACR rates, Recycle Disposal Rates and the ne variance.

Mr. Groshon pointed out that the chart included the cost of handling, transporting, processing and marketing the materials, which gets you to the ACR. He explained that when the calculation results in a negative number, it constitutes a charge but when it is a positive number, it is a rebate. The financial expense for recycling began after China, as the major buyer of recycling, cut off the import of all mixed fiber, which by percentage, is the material which Casella recycles the most. Coupled with that import ban, China simultaneously lowered the acceptable contamination rate per bale of materials, from three percent, down to one-half of one percent. When that occurred, the equipment used to process recyclables could not meet the new standard without slowing down the lines and increasing the labor component to the process. Casella then tried to exit foreign markets and cultivate domestic markets for recycling commodities, which Mr. Groshon stated had met with some success and most material is shipped domestically now instead of overseas. That said, a review of the commodity prices over the last year indicates that the values have remained lower than when the program first launched.

Mr. Groshon reported that at Casella's primary recycling facility in Charlestown, Massachusetts, all of the equipment that had been in place a year ago was removed and replaced with new state of the art equipment to make operations more efficient. The new equipment is also expected to lower labor costs but he explained that things are still subject to seasonal fluctuations in supply and demand, which affect costs. At this point, Mr. Groshon paused to see if there were questions from committee members.

Gerry explained that Pembroke is a member of NRRA, which has a somewhat different take on the marketability of "recyclable" materials. He noted that for plastics, NRRA is advising its members to focus on number 1 and number 2 plastics, to treat numbers 3, 6 and 7 as trash, and to give careful consideration to numbers 4 and 5. He asked Mr. Groshon what Casella's take was on NRRA's position and whether the aggregate value of plastics could be improved if certain items were simply treated as trash. Mr. Groshon explained at some length that Casella and its competitors united to establish uniform definitions of what was to be in single stream recycling after China instituted greater restrictions of what was allowable. In essence, he discouraged the notion that residents might cull certain materials from the single stream and that equipment be left to accomplish that task.

Sally asked for a detailed explanation of what the sought-after commodities were and of which types of items were not suitable for single stream. Mr. Groshon explained that certain small plastic items, such as individual bottle caps, were too small to be processed and tended to "fall through" to the trash level. He passed around a flier which identified such items and considerable discussion ensued. In summary he stated that the "Can be recycled" list is relatively small, while the "Can't be recycled" list is very large. He noted that Casella therefore strives to make the rules of what can be recycled as simple as possible.

Wendy opined that if the committee could effectively communicate to the residents, what is recyclable and what isn't, then only actual recyclable materials would be placed in to the category with the rest going to trash. The net effect would be to reduced what was being sent as recycling, thus mitigating the higher recycling cost.

Gerry expressed a concern that when looking at budgeted amounts, since the cost per ton for recycling exceeds that of trash, the simple budgetary suggestion to higher costs might to be just trash everything. He noted that under the present contract, Pembroke has a commitment to the recycling program and significant capital outlays for equipment, not to mention residents who are now conditioned to separate single stream recyclables from trash. He then asked Mr. Groshon whether, at the end of the existing contract term, whether Casella would be likely to bid on re replacement proposal to accept only trash, if the community were to move in that direction. Mr. Groshon replied that Casella has invested millions of dollars in recycling technology and has adopted a philosophy aimed at protecting the environment. As such, they would be less that supportive of any suggestion that recycling be abandoned. That said, he noted that some municipalities have stopped their recycling efforts and, to the question, if Pembroke voted to discontinue recycling, Casella would, baring and regulatory prohibitions, entertain bidding on a trash only replacement contract.

Mr. Groshon stated that the last twelve months have been challenging but that there is reason to believe that the situation may be poised to improve. He spoke at length about the uncertainty and seasonality of the markets and stated that he anticipated more favorable condition in the next 12 months and in the past twelve.

Wendy asked what was behind that thought, to which Mr. Groshon replied that pending economic and market factors all appeared to be more favorable.

Divid Jodoin sated that there were a number of articles and videos prepared by National Public Radio which were critical of recycling program, which state that much of what is collected as recycling actually goes to landfills instead. He asked Mr. Groshon to comment on such articles. Mr. Groshon replied that he could only comment on what his company is doing and he reiterated that everything they collect that is recyclable actually gets recycled. He added that much is being done in resource consolidation, which centralized what is being collected over larger regions so that markets can be created for those larger volumes where large input volumes are of economic importance. Part of what Casella does is to search out new uses for recycled commodities and to partner with companies that have an interest in commodities that Casella can provide.

Sally referred to a flier that Mr. Groshon had circulated, which was new to committee members. That simple one-page flier explained what is recyclable and what isn't. She noted that when Casella develops or obtains new educational fliers of this type, that it is important that they be shared with the committee so that they can be replicated and used as part of an outreach effort to residents. Sally then asked about the types of products that are being manufactured with recycled materials. Mr.

Groshon listed a number of products and discussion ensued on how each materials finds new life. Sally noted to importance of such knowledge in countering the type of anti-recycling sentiment seen by the committee on NPR.

Gerry then asked that the discussion turn to the future of trash disposal. He noted the committee's awareness of permitting problems in Bethlehem and Dalton and with no new landfills coming on line and existing ones rapidly filling up, did Casella have a forecast of what the cost per ton might be at contract renewal time. Mr. Groshon gave a broad reply indicating that costs are based on location but in general, the costs to be expected will be in the vicinity of \$150 per ton. Gerry noted that if the cost per ton for recycling did not rise while trash rose to \$150 per ton, the current concern over recycling's higher cost would become moot.

Mr. Groshon explained Casella's thoughts on continued use of the Bethlehem landfill and their goal of creating an alternate site in Dalton, but he cautioned that there was uncertainty associated with the future of both locations and that shipping waste to other parts of the country by rail might become an expensive necessity. Wendy noted that New Hampshire does not have a rail hub, which complicates shipping out any kind of good by rail and she questioned whether joint efforts by interested industries might help to create better shipping opportunities for all. Mr. Groshon replied that he was unaware of whether Casella was exploring such an option.

Sally inquired whether Casella was considering incineration of trash, to which Mr. Groshon replied that he was not aware of any such consideration. He explained that nobody is building new incineration plants. They tend to be very expensive to operate and are not as lucrative as they were in the past.

Wendy then asked about Casella's thoughts on recent regulatory changes by the State Department of Environmental Services, (DES) regarding composting. Mr. Groshon replied that he needed to be cautious about his response and that DES appears to have simplified the permitting process for composting. The objective is to make it easier for communities to establish their own facilities for composting organic waste. As far as Casella is concerned, they only own and operate two transfer stations in New Hampshire, one in Belmont and one in Allenstown, and neither is suitable for adding composting to what they do because of size constraints and the proximity to residential neighborhoods. He went on to explain in greater detail what organic materials can go into composting and how waste food comes into the picture.

Gerry asked whether, at contract renewal time, Casella would entertain a contract fixed price for ACR to remove price volatility from the equation for the client. Mr. Groshon replied that a fixed ACR could be had but that it would include a true-up at the end of each year, which if not paid, would need to be contractually brought forward to the ensuing period.

Following discussions about how Casella might assist with Pembroke's future outreach efforts and the committee having covered all of the issues identified for the meetings, the committee thanked the Casella representatives for their attendance and they departed the meeting at 7:45 PM.

David Jodoin noted that the budgets were due to be submitted shortly and he asked whether the committee intended to submit and report or recommendation to the Select Board regarding the solid waste budget for the coming year. Gerry Fleury then made a motion that the committee report to the Select Board that it had met with Casella and is recommending that the solid waste budgets for trash and recycling for the coming year be approved inclusive of increased costs. The motion received a second from Sally Hyland. There was no discussion, The chair called for the vote and it was all in favor. It was decided that David would notify the committee of the date of the selectmen's meeting when the report would be heard so that a Solid Waste Committee representative could be there to make the presentation.

Returning to the first New Business agenda item, Chairman Weisiger opened discussion on her desire to step down as chair, but remaining one the committee, citing the heavy time demand imposed by her job, which she felt did not allow adequate time to address committee matters as rapidly as she would like. Following brief discussion on the steps required for her to accomplish her objective, her tended her resignation with regrets and opened the meeting for nominations for a successor. Sally Hyland nominated Gerry Fleury to become chair, which drew a second from Wendy Weisiger. Gerry indicated that he would accept the nomination if that met with the committee's approval and nominations closed. The vote was taken with Sally Hyland and Wendy Weisiger voting in favor and Gerry Fleury abstaining. Immediately following the vote. Gerry took over as new chair and proceeded to the next section of the meeting.

IV. Adjourn:

Sally Hyland made a motion to adjourn at 7:59 PM. Wendy Weisiger seconded the motion and it passed without objection.

Gerry Fleury, Chairman Elect

For more detailed information, the meetings are taped and can be seen from the Pembroke Town web-site under the heading of Recorded Meetings, which will take you to the site entitled: https://townhallstreams.com/towns/pembroke_nh. To run the video, simply select the correct year and month and then the desired meeting.