

Boxborough Energy Committee - Meeting Minutes for October 12, 2016

Town Hall, Hilberg/Morse Room

Present: Francie Nolde, Raid Suleiman, Abby Reip

Absent: Richard Garrison, Larry Grossman, Keshava Srivastava, Santiago Tapia-Perez,  
Bob Stemple (BoS liaison)

Meeting commenced at 7:19pm. Minutes were discussed, but not voted on because we did not have a quorum.

We reviewed the Pay As You Throw (PAYT) discussion from the previous meeting when Carolyn Dann (DEP) attended. Our takeaway was that our changes to the transfer station did not increase recycling, but it did save the Town money. Carolyn would like us to pursue PAYT as a way to increase recycling and, thereby, reduce solid waste. We reviewed the numbers that were provided by Vicki Franz (Boxborough DPW) and it appears to us that although the solid waste tonnage has varied (up, down, up), recycling seemed constant.

In September's meeting, Carolyn suggested we explore costs of curbside pickup. We are awaiting analysis from Bob Stemple (BoS). Currently, the transfer station revenue does not support the operating cost. There are several scenarios in which we could impose higher sticker fees, seniors paying, increasing taxes, etc in order to increase revenue and reduce the cost to the Town. If we were to switch to a curbside pickup service for residents, we would close the transfer station, and the land could be used for another municipal purpose (like a solar farm).

Raid pointed out that, perhaps, we should not be charging anything for the transfer station since residents in our town pay considerable taxes and do not receive many services. It could entice more people to consider choosing to buy a home in Boxborough, as it would be a service that most surrounding towns do not provide.

Francie spoke with Tessa David from Groton. They have gone to a PAYT model, and their transfer station is now self-funded. They were able to get this passed at Town Meeting with considerable public outreach that included surveys and several public meetings. When Groton residents were given several scenarios, they saw PAYT as their best option for cost and fairness.

In our past meetings, we voted to pursue the construction and operation of a swap shed at the Transfer Station. Finding space and managing the inventory are two challenges. Francie's discussion with Tessa (from Groton) uncovered a system that they use so that residents don't have to bring unwanted, but usable items to the transfer station: an online exchange. This is done by setting up a Google group and members must subscribe. Members can post items that they want to give away and can look for items that others are discarding. Membership is restricted to Town residents and is managed by a volunteer administrator. The exchange of goods is done by the interested parties. Raid volunteered to set up the board and act as administrator. Abby will be the alternate administrator. The swap site will need publicity. We discussed placing info in The Beacon, Action Unlimited, Weekly Chatter (school newsletters), Town of Boxborough website, and placing a slip of paper in the next tax bill.

Francie provided us with an update on MAPC ESCO selection. Three of the five towns involved have a representative on the selection committee. First interviews have taken place and committee members are

not yet in agreement on which company to choose. Additional interviews will be held Wednesday, October 19th. The vote must be unanimous. Once selected, the ESCO will do a cursory energy audit of Town buildings for free. However, an industrial grade energy audit will carry a cost. Since Boxborough is in the early stages of replacing our public safety buildings, an ESCO may be helpful in making recommendations for energy efficient design. Boxborough's building inspector, Gerry Noel, would have to work with the ESCO and play a large role in this project, as well.

Discussion turned to the severe drought and the delayed response of the BoS in acknowledging it and encouraging residents to conserve. A robo-call to residents did not go out until the first week of October. Francie has inquired (to BoS) about Boxborough's Water Resource Committee and our need to re-activate the committee in pursuit of a Town water supply and/or water conservation.

Meeting adjourned: 8:20

Action items:

1. Bob Stemple to talk to DPW about curbside trash pickup.
2. Raid to set up Google group for exchange of free items between Town residents.