

## MINUTES

### BRUNSWICK RECYCLING AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Town Hall Council Chambers

March 28, 2023

The meeting was called to order by Chair Ecker at 4:31 pm.

**Members Present:** Jamie Ecker, Steve Weems, Stephen Wood, David Costello, Karen Topp, Tom Rumpf.

**Members Absent:** Poppy Arford, Shelly Raymond

**Town Staff Present:** Jay Astle (Public Works Director), Ashley Charleson (Environmental Planner)

**Public Present:** Diane Freeze, Bill Good

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#### Administrative Matters:

- At Chair Ecker's request, based on a previous conversation with Shelley Raymond, a motion was made and seconded (Ecker, Rumpf) to approve Shelley Raymond as Secretary of the Committee. The vote was unanimous in favor. Tom Rumpf agreed to take minutes for this meeting in Shelley's absence.
- Shelley has also agreed to serve as Public Outreach Facilitator for the Committee. A motion was made and seconded (Ecker, Costello) to approve her appointment. The vote was unanimous in favor.
- The minutes of the February meeting were moved for adoption (Weems, Wood) and unanimously approved.
- Proposed Charter Revisions – Jamie reported that the proposed revisions to the Committee's Charter, including the renaming to Sustainability Committee, were reviewed by the Appointments Committee and forward on to the Town Council for their action.

#### Legislative Updates:

- Chair Ecker noted that Rep. Arford had shared two pending bills related to solid waste and recycling with him and asked the Committee to encourage the Town Council to support them.
  - LD 1171 would increase the state landfill fee from \$2 to \$7/ton for municipal solid waste (MSW), ash from MSW waste to energy plants, and construction and demolition debris. The monies generated will go into a state fund to provide grants to municipalities to improve recycling and waste management programs.
  - LD 1172 will require annual reporting of solid waste and recycling tonnages from municipalities to the State, increasing the reporting frequency from the current biannual schedule.

The committee discussed both bills and a motion was made to encourage the Town Council to send a letter of support for both bills to the Legislature (Rumpf, Weems). The motion was approved unanimously.

### **Solid Waste Subcommittee Report:**

Jay Astle passed out a set of graphs (attached) showing trends in residential solid waste and recycling from 2018-2022 in tons collected. He noted that there was a significant drop in residential solid waste volume in 2020, the last year the town landfill was open, as many residents brought their MSW directly to the landfill, rather than having it picked up curbside. The Town's recycling rate declined in 2021 and 2022, in part due to the closure of the landfill in 2020. Bulk metal, brush and some other materials are no longer accepted at the Town's processing facility, leaving the Casella transfer station on Bath Road as the primary alternative. We have no way of gathering tonnages of materials delivered to the Casella facility. Residential solid waste peaked in 2019 due to a severe windstorm that left many downed trees and limbs which were taken to the Graham Road facility.

Jay also shared graphs showing the progress made, under our state grant, with recycling of residential organics and food waste. Subscription curbside collection (Garbage to Garden) increased by over 200 households in 2022, to about 800 households. Households composting at home increased by 30% to 400. More than 100 households took advantage of the two drop off sites at the Public Works Garage and the Recreation Center. The drop off numbers are expected to rise as we have added additional bins due to the demand at both sites.

Stephen Wood reported that the high school has initiated a project to develop a video outlining the Town's efforts to increase food waste recycling, which will be available on the local cable channel when it is completed. Stephen also reported that he is hoping to plan the Eco Maine Kickoff Event for August 19<sup>th</sup>, in conjunction with the Brunswick Art Walk event. The committee members expressed their support for this plan, and agreed that we will need a couple of committee members present during the event to assist EcoMaine and Garbage to Garden staff in staffing booths.

### **Energy and Sustainability Subcommittee Report:**

Steve Weems outlined a new state program - Community property-assessed clean energy, or CPACE. Under the program, approved in 2021, private building owners are able borrow money on favorable terms for energy efficiency and/or, renewable energy projects and make repayments via an assessment on their property tax bill. The subcommittee will be working with the town to get qualified for this program.

Steve also reported that we have met with Revision Energy and town staff in the hope that a new level three EV charging station can be developed in Brunswick under the State's incentive program. Revision is exploring possible locations in Brunswick, within one mile of Route 1, and hopes to submit an application to the State.

The subcommittee is also exploring the feasibility of adding an additional build date for Window Dressers, a nonprofit organization the works with volunteers in communities to build double pane plastic and wooden inserts that can significantly improve the energy efficiency of older homes. Window Dressers currently does one annual "build" in Brunswick at St. Paul's Church.

Finally, the subcommittee is planning for a public event, most likely in the fall, to provide information to Brunswick homeowners on state and federal incentives and tax credits to make

energy efficiency improvements and green energy investments in their homes that will lower their energy bills.

**Climate Action Plan Task Force:**

Ashley Charleson reported that to date there have been 13 applicants for the Task Force, and they are a promising group. There are still two more weeks before the application deadline, and she is hoping for a number of additional qualified applicants. The Task Force will assist Ashley and the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) in the development of the Town's Climate Action Plan. She is about halfway through the data collection phase for the greenhouse gas emissions inventory which will be conducted by GPCOG under the \$50,000 grant the Town received from the State. The Bowdoin College Environmental Center will also contribute to the study. She distributed a table showing the data sources she is exploring (attached) and asked committee members to let her know if they are aware of other data sources she is missing.

**Upcoming Events:**

Jamie made note of a couple of events which might be of interest:

- 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Symposium in honor of the Bowdoin College Environmental Studies Program, April 13 and 14.
- Citizen's Climate Lobby is hosting an event at Curtis Library on Tuesday, April 11<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 to 8:00 pm – "Save Your Money & Our Climate."

Jay reported that the Town will sponsor a Hazardous Waste Collection Day on Saturday April 29 at the Public Works Facility. Preregistration is required, and will begin on April 10 at 8:00 am.

**Public Comment:**

Diane Freeze, 21 McClellan Street, asked for clarification on where the Town's recyclables end up. Many of her neighbors have told her they believe they are just going to landfill. Jay explained that the recyclables collected curbside by Casella are transported first to Casella's transfer station off Bath Road, and then transported to Lewiston where they are processed in Casella's recycling facility, where they are sorted and sold to various markets.

Bill Good congratulated the Committee on its work.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Tom Rumpf