



Town of Harpswell

P.O. Box 39

Harpswell, ME 04079

Recycling Committee Minutes

April 19, 2023 at 4:00 pm

Harpswell Town Office

Members: Chuck Perow, ✓George Barker, ✓Philip Conner, ✓Jack Stokinger, Bob Eaton, ✓Gina Snyder
✓Dave Chipman

Meeting called to order: 4:04

Approval of Minutes from April 19, 2023 meeting. Not done

New Business Discussion:

A. Manager's Report: not available, Chuck absent. Chuck said Spring Hazmat day was scheduled for May 6, 2023 in Bath 9-1 and reservations are required.

B. Organize road pick up for John Gilliam Day 4/22/23:

Pizza will be available at the Grange at noon.

Leaving from the Recycling Center at 2:00:

>Philip and Mark Hershey will use Mark's truck and pick up Harpswell Islands Road from the Mountain road to Gurnet Bridge and Cundy's Harbor Road;

>Dave, George and Jack will use Jack's truck with Chuck's trailer and do Mountain Road and south on Harpswell Neck to Potts Point; and

>Bob & Gina using Gina's truck will do Harpswell Neck road from Mountain Road to end of Bailey Island.

Dave Chipman will make another run on Sunday to look for left overs.

C. Gina report on EPR progress: no further progress to report.

We discussed the encouraging reply we had received from Elena on the EPR committee:

On Mar 29, 2023, at 12:37 PM, Bertocci, Elena <Elena.Bertocci@maine.gov> wrote:

Thanks, Philip, for your participation, for the fact sheet, and for bringing these question to our attention again.

How much has your study included the experience gained by the European and Canadian efforts?

The department's work during the writing of the statute and now during implementation has included sustained communication with people working on packaging stewardship in Canada, particularly those working for stewardship organizations in Quebec and British Columbia. European experience has been harder to tap into for a couple of reasons. First, the language barrier prevents in depth discussions about country specific programs. Second, events and publications that describe the "European experience" are often too broad to be helpful because all the programs are different. While we have reached out a few times and read through many materials made available in English, I cannot say that we have a thorough understanding of how all the European systems function – any learning from Europe has been in the form of broad preferred practices that are being promoted by certain entities.

I would also add here that Maine and the rest of the US have fairly extensive experience in the area of product stewardship generally, and many of the principles are the same. Knowledge of these programs and of Maine's wider waste management system is also very relevant.

Have we gained from this knowledge and experience?

I think substantially. I'll provide a bit of information on some of the key takeaways.

The municipal reimbursement model prescribed by the statute is based on the system that has been in place in Quebec for many years. All of the Canadian provinces other than British Columbia use or used this system. Quebec's system is undergoing some changes but the data shows that it produced some of the highest recycling rates in Canada and did so at lower cost than the British Columbia system. My understanding is that the move to more industry control was part of a compromise during updates to legislation that increased producer financial responsibility from 80% to 100%. Where changes have not yet been implemented, it is not clear how much or what will change.

I think it is clear that producer fees should reflect the cost of managing the packaging as closely as possible, with "eco-modulation" used to provide further incentives. This direct connection was not present in the earliest models and is necessary to achieve desired changes to packaging material. Research on packaging changes under European models has shown as much. How this costing is done is, of course, the key. Such detailed information can be difficult to find because that is not the kind of thing that tends to be translated or widely discussed. Our Canadian counterparts are moving from a system that looks at actual municipal costs to one

that models what those costs would be when using an “optimized” sorting facility. We have decided this doesn’t make sense for Maine for a number of reasons: our MRFs aren’t “optimized”, many of our municipalities do not use MRFs, and it is far from clear that MRFs are the ideal way to process these materials. We plan on using the data obtained for the purpose of reimbursing municipalities as the basis of producer fees. This is done in many programs and it is a financing mechanism that has been shown to be sustainable over time in EPR, generally. Government setting of costs tends to be a problem, as is allowing a monopoly to “negotiate” costs with other players. If possible, it works best for an (imperfect) market to set costs.

It’s been helpful to keep in mind that, despite being highly touted in this country, single-stream collection is not a clear winner. British Columbia’s system is one place where an attempt to collect all covered materials together resulted in very high per pounds costs and relatively low recycling outcomes. Many places in Europe use source separation. The law being implemented in Oregon defines what should be single-stream and what should be source separated. Maine’s statute is careful not to prescribe how material is being handled by municipalities. In implementation we are hoping to obtain some good data on costs and recycling outcomes resulting from the myriad of processes used throughout the state and to make any lessons learned available to municipalities so they might make changes to their processes where appropriate.

In terms of applicability to Maine, geography is a key factor, as is material through put. Municipalities have a lot of experience and have spent many years coming up with systems that work for their residents. It seems like any system that would ignore that experience would be a mistake. As a result, we hope that a sustained, robust stakeholder process accompanied by improved data can help show what is working and what can be improved.

Have they been willing to provide useful input?

I would say that willingness to talk varies, as does usefulness of input. Some of the people who are most willing to talk have an agenda, which is fine as long as you understand that agenda and look for input from others as well.

We have also benefited from substantial input from those closer to home who have a good sense of how waste management works (or doesn’t) here in Maine. We’ve had the opportunity to visit many transfer stations and have on-going conversations with the big players in Maine’s recycling world. We haven’t made it down to Harpswell but would love to come down to see your operations and hear more of your thoughts if that is something that fits into your schedule.

Sincerely, Elena

We discussed that Elena's reply indicates that the committee appears to be making positive progress towards preparing a workable EPR plan which is not evident from witnessing online the meetings.

Our letter to the EPR Committee was signed and sent.

D. Discuss our input for Comprehensive Plan update per Bob & Chuck's work since last meeting. Not done since both Bob and Chuck did not attend. However, Amy Haible did contact Philip that the Solid Waste portion of the Comprehensive Plan was not scheduled for review yet.

We briefly discussed the newspaper reported problem with shrink wrap disposal in Maine. We will investigate how this might be improved by finding out how other states handle this problem.

Old Business:

We discussed how the Recycling Committee might make a greater contribution. Gina suggested that we should explore ways to more promote composting since this is a positive way to lower our costs. Gina volunteered to contact Garbage to Gardens to ask about promotions and reaching out to the new private haulers.

Next Meeting: May 17, 2023 @ 4:00 pm at the Town Office

Meeting Adjourned: 4:54