

Solid Waste Advisory Committee Workshop

Tuesday, April 1, 2025

4:30 PM

Members:

Chair: Councilor Brent Todd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Councilor Jeff Foote	<input type="checkbox"/>
Councilor Judith Kurtz	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Councilor Jim Schlosser	<input type="checkbox"/>
Councilor Karen McNamara	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Councilor Kris Schultz	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Eric Steinhauser	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reagan Bissonnette	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Carol Foss	<input type="checkbox"/>
Linda Zollo	<input type="checkbox"/>

Guests:

Erin Banfield – Director of Municipal Services, Casella

Michael Paine – Belmont Region Manager, Casella

Staff:

Chip Chesley – General Services Director

Jeff Hoadley – General Services Deputy Director

Angelina Zulkic – General Services Communications Coordinator

At 4:30 p.m., Chairman Todd welcomed the committee and noted there was no quorum for this meeting. It was decided to enter into a non-meeting informational work session with no action taken on any agenda items.

February 4, 2025 meeting minutes were not discussed or approved.

Erin Banfield, Director of Municipal Services at Casella, presented case studies to the group about other communities that have transitioned to automated curbside trash collection with similar pay-as-you-throw trash programs. Falmouth, ME, and North Yarmouth, ME transitioned to automated collection in 2024 and continue to use trash bag programs to generate revenue to cover some collection costs. Both communities saw a 6-10% increase in Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) tonnage after transitioning to automated collection with toter containers.

Councilor McNamara asked about cities that discontinued the use of pay-as-you-throw bags and what those cities did to cover the loss of revenue from the bags and the increase in costs from additional MSW tonnage. Erin answered that Wyndham, MA moved to a tax-based system, while others have set up a utility to pay by the cart and add the usage to water bills. Putnam, CT automated collection and then discontinued their bag program to an annual cart-based fee with their taxes with 30 days to pay before removing their cart. Councilor McNamara asked if cart-based fees were equal or equitable based on how much trash someone is producing or if it was a flat fee for everybody. Erin answered it's a flat fee, which is a concern heard from constituents, and then elaborated that a per-pickup bill would be too administratively heavy to create and keep track of. Erin stated as we go through the pilot program for automated transition, we want to make sure we can track and measure how things are fair and make sure we are making the right decisions to determine what is justifiable or not.

Chairman Todd reiterated that moving away from pay-as-you-throw bags would move costs to taxpayers in their tax bill with a rough estimate of a 4.4% tax increase, based on data calculated by the City's Finance Department. On a \$350,000 home, this would represent about \$150. The cost of large PAYT bags are \$3.20 per bag. That's about the same as 47 bags per year.

Erin discussed possible challenges with AI technology integration with automated trash collection, which can include more administrative oversight, parcel area challenges with GPS/GIS address identifications, camera capture errors, additional equipment maintenance, and program management.

Chip Chesley, General Services Director, mentioned the plan is to request to invest in new evolving technology for one Casella truck for this upcoming budget to help the City retain the pay-as-you-throw bag program. The pilot program will provide an opportunity to see what works and what doesn't work in the transition period to automated collection. Starting with a smaller investment of one piece of equipment is the smarter approach to investigate if the model works.

Councilor Schultz asked what the current compliance rate is for the PAYT program. Chip answered the program has a high compliance rate because trash is not collected if it's not in a purple PAYT trash bag, which makes it easy to correct that behavior. Erin noted that automated collection would send notices to residents about non-compliance after dumping trash into the hopper, which provides less of a human element at the curb ensuring compliance.

Discussion ensued regarding how to ensure compliance with the pay-as-you-throw bag program and conversations included manual monitoring and tagging operations, possibly investing in monitoring technology, and the need to create program rules that could allow for cart removals and/or fines or reinstatement fees for non-compliance.

A member of the public asked if we pay more now per ton for recycling than trash in the new contract. Chairman Todd answered the City historically has chosen cost-saving measures, but recycling will cost more and is the right thing to do. The key will be to educate the public on what to recycle and to reduce contamination rates of non-acceptable materials. It's estimated that Concord's contamination rate is currently around 10%, which is low and indicates a high quality of recyclables and proper procedures.

It was discussed that the committee would not hold any summer meetings as tentatively planned for June and August and would regroup in October, or possibly sooner if desired.

The group dismissed at 6:00 p.m.