

Good evening and welcome to our Forum on trash collection

- We are here tonight to talk about the town of Hamilton's trash collection program, which includes curbside removal and disposal of solid waste, recycling, compost material (organics) and textiles.
- Our goals tonight are:
- 1) share some information about:
  - the town's program
  - the challenges facing the program - both in costs and environmental stewardship
  - the options for dealing with those challenges
- 2) and to gather feedback and comment from the public about the program and our options
- When we are finished here this evening, the members of this panel will provide direction, that coupled with the recommendations of the Waste Reduction Committee, will be used by the Board of Selectmen to make a decision about how best to serve the town and its residents going forward
- I want this discussion to be informative and collegial, we are not going to show you a power point presentation, but will refer to some slides and handouts that we have prepared for this evening

#### About the Program

- Currently, the Town of Hamilton provides for weekly residential curbside collection and disposal of solid waste, recyclables, compost material and textiles through separate contracts with Caseslla Waste, Wheelabrator, Brick Ends Farm and Simply Recycling. We also have a program for electronics and white goods disposal.

- Solid waste removal is capped at one 35-gallon barrel per family/household, with any more than that having to be disposed of in Blue Bags, which have to be purchased locally. Large items are limited to one per week, with the purchase of a bulk item sticker.
- To support this program, the town previously made a significant investment, in providing residents with a solid waste (trash) barrel, recycling containers and compost containers.
- The town began this program in April 2012 with every other week (EOW) solid waste collection and every week collection of recyclables and composting. In the intervening weeks solid waste was collected only in the Blue Bags, which had to be purchased.
- The town's hauler at the time was Hiltz, which stopped honoring its contracts with municipal governments in 2016. At that point the town transitioned to Casella as its hauler and recycler.
- Beginning in September 2016, with the arrival of Casella, the town began collecting at no extra charge, a 35-gallon bin of solid waste every week, as well as unlimited recycling and composting.
- The decision to go to every week solid waste collection was touted as a financial one, but Hiltz had also been picking up solid waste every week, the difference was that on the off week, the solid waste had to be in a Blue Bag.

### Challenges Facing the Program

- Currently, the town has a contract with Casella that provides for curbside collection at a rate of \$14 per household per month, which according to Casella includes solid waste (\$6), recycling (\$6) and compost (\$2) removal and transportation. This contract runs through 2026. This contract provides for the collection and

transportation of our trash streams, and does not include the costs of disposing of the material (tipping fees).

- The Casella contract also provides for Casella to dispose of our recycling tonnage and share any profit from that transaction with the town or for the town to cover any losses incurred by Casella in disposing of recycling. Since the collapse of the recycling market in early 2017, the town has been paying for the cost of recycling disposal. China is no longer buying US recyclables to fuel its manufacturing. The cost of disposing of recycling is variable, but has been steadily climbing since 2018 and continues to do so. The average price per ton for disposing of recycling in 2018 was \$65.25, which though high is still less than disposal of solid waste.
- We also have a contract with Wheelabrator to dispose of our solid waste, currently at a cost of \$69.50/per ton of solid waste that is disposed of, but this contract expires in June 2020. We have been quoted a price of \$82/ton for the start of a five-year successor contract that will begin next July and escalate in each of the five years of the deal, topping out at \$93.19/ton in 2024.
- We also have a current agreement with Brick Ends for \$45/ton for accepting our compostable material.
- From 2013 to 2018, the town's total tonnage of solid waste grew from 1,225 tons to 1,438 tons, even as the population of the community declined. This is an increase of 213 tons of solid waste.
- The total refuse tonnage in the same period went from 2,532 tons to 2,826 tons, a total increase of 294 tons. So nearly the entire increase of tonnage in our program has been in the solid waste stream.
- This means that our trash collection and disposal program has gotten more expensive, as the town's population has declined.

- With the escalation of the solid waste tipping contract (Wheelabrator) coming in 2020, it is likely to get more expensive in the years ahead.
- Another important consideration is that beginning in 2012, when the town began collecting compost town wide, and until the switch to every week solid waste collection, the town had consistently seen a reduced level of solid waste tonnage, and a corresponding increase in composting tonnage.
- Since the establishment of every week curbside collection, composting has fallen and solid waste tonnage has increased by a proportionate amount - recycling tonnage has largely remained steady.
- A final major challenge facing this program is the environmental impact of providing every week solid waste collection.
- Scientific evidence shows that increases in organic matter in solid waste disposal – such as the burning of compostable materials – increases the level of greenhouse gasses in our atmosphere
- Evidence further exists that composting of organic matter reduces greenhouse gas emissions and indeed actually has a positive impact on the atmosphere and the environment, by sequestering carbon as it breaks down, locking it into the earth and enriching the soil.
- Given the correlation between the increase of solid waste tonnage and the decrease of composting in town, it is evident that the town's current trash collection program does more harm to the environment than the previous every other week (EOW) solid waste collection program did.
- Over the past year, the town has tried, through the efforts of the Hamilton Waste Reduction Committee, to educate residents about:
  - the program

- environmental and programmatic advantages of composting over solid waste disposal and,
- the need to recycle cleanly
- These attempts to educate and encourage better use of composting and recycling have not been successful. Though there has been an impact on our recycling stream since the WRC began putting rejection stickers on non-compliant recycling and sending letters to residents explain the do's and don'ts
- The town now finds itself in a situation where we are offering a program to residents that 1) is more harmful to the environment and 2) is becoming more and more expensive.
- Given the skyrocketing cost and the rising use of the solid waste stream over other more environmentally friendly options, the town is forced to look at its means for encouraging more composting and reducing the volume of our solid waste.

#### Options for addressing the Challenges

- The Waste Reduction Committee had previously discussed nine options for the town:
  - Education on benefits of composting
  - Mandatory composting
  - “No Food Waste in Trash” Policy
  - Return to EOW solid waste collection w/ Blue Bags collection on off weeks
  - Start EOW solid waste collection with no off-week Blue Bags collection
  - Transition to full Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT)
  - Keep existing program, but increase cost of Blue Bags
  - Bill households for trash collection and disposal
  - Allow every week collection with barrel stickers

- The Waste Reduction Committee has recommended:
  - a return to the EOW solid waste collection w/ Blue Bags collection on off weeks and any “on weeks” collection over 35 gallons
  - a possible rise in the price of Blue Bags, to help the town cover the costs of the program
  - that the BOS confirm that town policy is for compostable matter to be out of the trash stream, utilizing the town-provided 13-gallon compost totes

Your Comments and Feedback