

**Town of Cape Elizabeth
Recycling Committee**

Meeting Minutes
April 6, 2017

Present: Kara Lavender Law (KL), Chair, Aubrey Miller (AM), Jennifer MacDonald (JM), Matthew Faulkner (MF), Tracy Floyd (TF), Tim Trachimowicz (TT) and Chelsea Torrey (CT)

Absent: none

Staff: Robert Malley, Director of Public Works (RM) was not present

Public: None present

Call to Order: Kara Lavender Law, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

Citizen Opportunity for Public Comment Not On the Agenda

No members of the public were present.

Welcome to and Introductions with New Committee Members

The committee welcomed new members TT and CT, and each committee member introduced themselves.

Meeting Minutes

The March 2, 2017 meeting minutes were approved (5 Yes, 0 No, 2 Abstain).

Committee Member Updates & Correspondence

KL noted that committee meetings for June 1 and October 5 have been added to the town calendar.

KL, with help from AM and TT, recapped the main messages from the Town Boards and Committees meeting held April 5, 2017. In particular, committee members were reminded that any communications about committee business between two or more people must be discussed at posted meetings that are open to the public, and not by email or phone. Distribution of any materials to the committee should be sent first to RM who will send to the committee, to ensure that a public record is kept. And members were reminded that when engaging with the public, they should take care to ensure that personal opinions not be portrayed as official positions of the committee.

TF volunteered to set up another visit for committee members to tour ecomaine sometime in May.

Update on Review of Retail Packaging Ordinance by Town Council

KL reported that the proposed ordinances are still listed as “pending” on the Ordinance Committee website, with no assignment to an upcoming agenda indicated. The committee recapped a brief history of the proposed ordinances for new members, TT and CT.

KL shared a document on “Talking Points” in support of the proposed ordinances for discussion. Two items were added: a note that plastic bags routinely end up in storm drains where they can cause clogging, driving municipalities to invest in trucks specifically designed for removal; and that Hannaford has reported an 80% decrease in single-use bag use following implementation of the Portland and South Portland single-use bag fee ordinances.

KL shared news about Saco’s recent plastic bag ban, in which Saco businesses may provide reusable bags, or bags made of paper or “degradable resin compounds” at no cost to customers. Saco banned polystyrene products in Sept. 2016.

TF shared the link of a Ted talk on a young inventor’s ideas about recycling polystyrene foam (https://www.ted.com/talks/ashton_cofer_a_young_inventor_s_plan_to_recycle_styrofoam).

Update on Outreach and Collaboration with Cape Elizabeth Schools

AM exchanged emails with Lauren Tarantino, the staff advisor for the Cape Elizabeth High School's environmental club. Students recently gave classroom presentations to peers about properly separating lunch waste in the cafeteria. They are planning an Earth Week celebration (April 24-28) and invited someone from the Recycling Committee to speak during their Achievement period (10:35-11:10) or to attend their regular club meetings (Thursdays 10:40-11:10). AM will follow up with Lauren about setting up a visit by interested committee members.

KL reminded the committee that we are on the schedule for the April 10 middle school staff meeting at 2:40pm in the Library Learning Commons, where we plan to introduce ourselves and share the committee goal to offer collaboration and support for school recycling efforts, especially regarding proper separation of waste in the cafeteria.

TT shared insights from his experience promoting recycling at the College of the Holy Cross, where he was a chef. Successful strategies included creating a student competition to reach a particular goal; to share and publicize metrics of success (e.g., # pounds or items recycled); and to enlist the top level of the administration to gain the political will necessary to make changes in current practices or systems.

TF and MF reported on a useful visit to Waynflete School, where they observed a very effective system of color-coded bins, universal symbols on signage, and effective education to encourage recycling, even of alkaline batteries. They also reported that Bates College has a successful and somewhat automated system for collecting recyclables.

Update on Strawberry Festival Planning

AM reported that festival organizers agreed to give the committee space for a table at the festival, to be held June 24 from 10am-3pm, as long as we have a strawberry-related activity. The committee discussed activities that could achieve three goals – engage, entertain, and educate: the “quiz” designed by TF for patrons to receive a Cape Recycles reusable Chico bag; ideas for plastic clamshell (strawberry container) reuse shared by CT, and a sorting activity for kids to reinforce best practices for school cafeteria waste sorting. The committee will also offer to stand near trash/recycling containers to help patrons properly sort their waste. AM will complete and submit the formal application before May 1.

Education & Outreach

JM reported that she has submitted an article to the Cape Courier describing how to avoid using plastic bags to collect and transport recyclables to the single-stream Silver Bullet collection points.

KL reported that Mark King of Maine DEP has kindly agreed to teach the Home Composting 101 course sponsored by the committee through Cape Elizabeth Community Services on May 10. By coincidence and good luck, this is the inaugural Maine Composts Week and also International Composting Week. KL will coordinate with Mark King about course content, TM will pursue a print ad for the Cape Courier to promote the course, and TT will look into an ad on community television.

MF suggested we consider starting a newsletter to distribute to Cape Elizabeth residents. This could be a printed insert in the Courier, and/or a PDF file available through the committee website, and/or shared via Facebook.

Other Business

KL reported that the Cape Elizabeth recycling rate for February was 36.9% according to ecomaine.

KL will email the committee to coordinate volunteering at Household Hazardous Waste collection day on May 13.

Citizen Opportunity for Discussion of Items on the Agenda

There was no public comment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08 PM

The next meeting of the Committee will be via assistance at Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day at the Recycling Center on May 13, 2017.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kara Lavender Law

DRAFT

Talking Points in Support of Proposed Ordinances on Single-use Bags and Polystyrene Foam Containers

Plastic bags:

1. Bags are no longer accepted by ecomaine in single-stream recycling
 - consumers have to collect them separately and bring to grocery store collection points in order to recycle
2. Bags are lightweight and easily transportable, easily becoming litter and a nuisance
 - plastic bags are 4th most common item in 2016 International Coastal Cleanup data from Ocean Conservancy
 - plastic bags clog ecomaine's sorting equipment
 - plastic bags end up in storm drains where they cause clogging; municipalities have invested in trucks designed specifically to remove these bags
 - the costs to deal with these externalities are borne by the tax-paying public
3. Bans or fees are more effective than educational campaigns in changing consumer behavior (accorign to Maine NRCM)
 - imposing a fee on all single-use bags (not just plastic) promotes reusable bag use
 - in the proposed Cape Elizabeth ordinance, consumers can still have a bag, they just have to pay for it
4. These kinds of ordinances are increasingly common in Maine and the U.S.:
 - Maine plastic bag bans: York, Freeport, Kennebunk, Saco
 - Maine plastic bag fees: Portland, South Portland, Falmouth, Topsham
 - Chicago plastic bag ban: when they banned plastic bags, they saw increase in use of paper bags and thicker plastic bags that retailers gave away for free but that people didn't reuse; now there is a 7c fee on all plastic and paper single-use bags
 - DC plastic bag fee: plastic bag use has declined by more than 60% since 5c bag fee went into effect
 - CA has a statewide ban on plastic bags with a fee for single-use paper bags

Polystyrene foam:

1. There is no economically and environmentally sound way to recycle expanded polystyrene (EPS)
 - used food containers are not typically accepted for recycling (none of largest 30 cities in U.S. accepts used EPS containers)
 - EPS is a lightweight and high volume material, and with no market for recycled material; it is cost-prohibitive to recycle
2. EPS easily breaks into beads that are extremely light and transportable and difficult to clean up
 - EPS food containers are one of the most common litter items found on beaches globally
3. Polystyrene is composed of styrene and benzene – both have carcinogenic properties
 - styrene is listed as a potential carcinogen by the National Toxicology Program
 - a laboratory study found that oyster reproduction is affected by exposure (via ingestion) to PS microplastics
4. Polystyrene bans are increasingly common in Maine:
 - Freeport (banned in 1990), Portland, South Portland, Topsham, Brunswick