

Town of Waldoboro, Maine
Transfer Station Committee Meeting Minutes
Municipal Building - 1600 Atlantic Highway
Thursday, September 8, 2011 – 7:00 p.m.

1. **Call to Order** – Bob Butler, Waldoboro citizen, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with a quorum present. Other committee members present were:

Liz Dinsmore, Friendship Select Board
John Higgins, Waldoboro Citizen
Will Payson, Cushing Select Board
Bruce Prior, Cushing Waste Hauler
Randy Robbins, Cushing Citizen
Ted Wooster, Waldoboro Select Board

Others in attendance: John Daigle, Waldoboro Department of Public Works; John Meyn, Friendship; Bill Blodgett, Lincoln County Commissioner, and Mike Thompson, Operations Manager of Lincoln County Recycling.

2. **Citizen Comments - None**
3. **Minutes** – The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the September 1st meeting. (Ted Wooster moved, Will Payson seconded.)
4. Discussion – Lincoln County Recycling

The Committee chair welcomed Bill Blodgett and Mike Thompson and asked them to help the Committee understand Lincoln County's role in recycling, to describe its operation and to enter into a discussion with Transfer Station Committee members to address questions and issues they wished to raise.

Bill pointed out that Lincoln County is the only county in the state that supports a recycling program. It was started about 30 years ago as an experiment, supported through a grant from the State of Maine. The program has evolved over time to adjust to new recycling initiatives, capital equipment requirements, and increases in the number of participating towns.

The objective is to remove tonnage from the waste stream, to help towns reduce the monies they would otherwise expend transporting Solid Waste to PERC. Each load of Solid Waste that is recycled saves each town in tipping fees and transport costs. The savings add up to thousands of dollars. Lincoln County Recycling currently moves about 400 tons of recyclables from the Waldoboro Transfer Station annually.

Lincoln County is able to offer a service that individual towns cannot afford. One town does not generate sufficient recyclable materials to support an efficient recycling operation with the required capital investment. Collectively, the 33 to 35 communities, (including 15 towns located outside the county) that now recycle through Lincoln County offer economies of scale and the financial clout to make the required capital investments, which include, among other things, trucks, skid steers, pads for composting, balers, and storage facilities. One example Mike cited is that of a baler. A new one costs about \$500,000. Lincoln County was able to purchase its for \$101,000-- a good deal, which would strain the budgets of any single town participating with the Lincoln County Recycling.

The participating towns work as a team to keep costs down. The alternative is for each town to recycle on its own, an option, which would not be cost effective.

Bill and Mike handed out materials, which provided statistical information about the operation and re-iterated that each town receives a copy of a monthly report from Lincoln County. **Copies of those materials are attached to these minutes and incorporated into them.**

(Mike mentioned the success of adding rigid No. 2 plastic to the list of items Lincoln County recycles. There's a market for rigid No. 2 plastic. He also discussed "e-waste", which includes such items as lamps and computer terminals. They contain mercury, which must be kept out of landfills and the Solid Waste transported to PERC. The State mandated that Lincoln County would collect e-waste at no charge. Consequently, Lincoln County does not charge to collect, transport and dispose of these items. Towns, however, may--and many do--charge a fee for accepting e-waste from their customers, allowing them to defray the costs of operating their transfer stations. The same is true of fluorescent bulbs. Lincoln County Recycling must pack the fluorescent bulbs it receives in separately identifiable boxes and pays the invoices it receives from the state for their disposal.)

Mike puts together annual capital and operating budgets. The budget's focus is on operating costs and revenues from selling recycled materials collected from the 33 to 35 towns. Mike seeks to cover operating expenses, about \$265,000 per year (including a payroll for 5 employees amounting to \$140,000) through sales of recyclables.

Bill Blodgett re-iterated that Lincoln County transports ONLY recyclables it collects from its member towns and prepares for sale to willing buyers. Lincoln County does NOT collect garbage.

Mike discussed Lincoln County's composting program. Lincoln County prepared a recycling area, complete with concrete pad. Mike's operation collects and processes the compost, turning it and screening it as required. Lincoln County sells the compost for \$25/cubic yard. Commercial concerns charge between \$50 and \$100 per cubic yard. Bob Butler asked if Lincoln County supplies its compost to commercial businesses. Mike emphasized he gives priority to making the compost available to private parties who reside in the member towns.

Bob Butler raised the issue of some private companies that collect recyclables from member towns and do NOT transport them to the Lincoln County facility, selling them instead to third parties. He pointed out that these actions deprive Lincoln County of potential recycling revenues and divert away from Lincoln County Recycling revenues it could otherwise use to defray its costs and reduce the taxes it collects from Lincoln County towns that support Lincoln County Recycling with their tax revenues.

Bill Blodgett pointed out that communities which have ordinances requiring all recyclables to be deposited at their transfer station and which ENFORCE those ordinances are in a better position to discourage such practices. He added that increasing numbers of towns in the Lincoln County Recycling consortium are installing scales to more accurately track the types and amounts of solid waste going through their facilities.

Bill pointed out that some member community transfer stations have gone off on their own when recyclable prices are high, despite ordinances, which dictate otherwise. They then “return to the fold” when the prices of recyclables come down. Bill emphasized that if a town has an ordinance it must be enforced. He pointed to the importance of examining one’s conscience and suggested the futility of making ordinances and then closing the eyes when it comes to enforcement.

John Higgins asked how Waldoboro and its transfer station partners benefit by sending, for example, recycled cardboard to Lincoln County. The current market price of recycled cardboard is about \$140.00 per ton. This is money Lincoln County collects from selling the recycled cardboard Waldoboro and its partners send to Lincoln County recycling. This is money the Waldoboro Transfer Station Partners do not see.

Will Payson added it’s not clear to him at all whether or how the Lincoln County tax credits are generated from the three towns’ recycling efforts.

These responses followed from various attendees: Sending the cardboard to Lincoln County to be sold for the account of the county (1) reduces the transportation and tipping fees the Waldoboro Transfer Station Partners would otherwise have to pay to transport the cardboard to PERC; (2) were the Waldoboro Transfer Station NOT to send the cardboard to PERC but to sell the cardboard on its own, it would have to invest in the storage facilities required to keep it dry and in saleable condition, and it would have to purchase the baler required to make it compact enough to transport; (3) moreover, Waldoboro’s Transfer Station would have to assume ALL of the risks entailed in speculating on the market prices of cardboard, plastic, metal, and other recyclables. Under the present arrangement, the risks, while real, are spread over the 35 towns that participate with Lincoln County Recycling; (4) Lincoln County Recycling incurs operating expenses, which the revenues from selling recycled cardboard help to defray. Butler said that the “tax credit currency” Will Payson asked about is not “dollars and cents” directly from the county to the towns. The tax credit currency is tonnages of recyclables that are diverted to Lincoln County, at its expense, instead of going to PERC at the cost of tipping fees and transport.

Bob Butler suggested that it IS important for Lincoln County to keep an eye on the costs of its operations. He asked if Lincoln County Recycling is doing all it can to keep its

operating and capital costs in line. He pointed out that Lincoln County can establish an “efficiency measure” by calculating a per-ton cost (or, in surplus years, a per-ton surplus) factor which indicates from one year to the next or even from one month to the next, the extent to which operating costs are covered by revenues.

Bill and Mike emphasized that Lincoln County Recycling tries to live within its budget. It wishes to cover all of its operating costs through the revenues it generates from selling recycled materials. If there is a surplus generated from selling recyclables, it goes to Lincoln County’s general fund to reduce taxes for the coming year. Bill pointed out that Lincoln County does not have an undesignated fund balance account. Tax revenues, grants, and revenues from sales of recyclables cover capital costs.

Randy Robbins wanted Bill and Mike to address single stream recycling. He believes government should find ways of encouraging and enabling people to act instead of holding over their heads the threat of punitive action if they do not. His view is that single stream recycling is far easier for taxpayers because it does NOT require people to sort their recyclables. Studies indicate that towns adopting single-stream significantly increase their recycling rates. Is it possible for Lincoln County to adopt single stream?

Bill and Mike responded:

- a. If Lincoln County adopts single stream it would either have to invest in very sophisticated, expensive equipment to sort the stream of recycled materials OR it would have to mobilize many more vehicles to transport uncompacted material to a single stream sorting facility. (Bill said a single stream facility cannot sort compacted single stream recyclables.) Neither alternative is attractive in view of the commitment Lincoln County Recycling has already made to its current system of collecting, compacting and selling the recycled materials of its partners.
- b. The Lincoln County facility is not large enough to handle unsorted, uncompacted, single stream materials. Again, an additional capital cost would be incurred to redesign the Lincoln County facility to enable it to accept single stream recyclables.
- c. The companies—there’s Eco Maine near Portland, for example-- that purchase single stream product provide low, teaser rates for the first contract cycle and then increase their rates during subsequent contract cycles.
- d. The bottom line is that there are better ways to increase recycling rates than resorting to single stream, which could prove to be more expensive in the medium- to long-terms

Will Payson, drawing on the experience of Cushing, and giving a lot of credit to Monika Magee, said much more can be done to raise recycling rates at the Waldoboro Transfer Station. For example, Cushing applied for and received a grant for the purchase of red recycling buckets. Cushing sold them at reduced prices to its residents, and slowly but surely, people purchased them and began to use them. The buckets helped to train people to separate their recyclables and to place them in the bucket. Will believes Cushing residents recycle far more than their transfer station partners in Waldoboro and Friendship as a result. Bill Blodgett and Mike Thompson concurred that colored containers do help to increase recycling rates.

John Daigle reminded those present that the Waldoboro Transfer Station sends about 400 tons of recyclables to Lincoln County annually. Were it to send another 120 tons, which Bill Blodgett and Mike Thompson assured the committee Lincoln County Recycling could handle, the additional tonnage would help out the Lincoln County Recycling budget and continue to reduce the tipping and transport fees the Waldoboro Transfer Station currently pays to move Solid Waste to PERC.

4. Next Meeting and Adjournment

Bob Butler stated that the next committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 22, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. It was moved and seconded that the meeting adjourn. All voted in favor.

Respectfully Submitted: Liz Dinsmore/Bob Butler

Approved:

Transfer Station Committee:

Town of Waldoboro, Maine

Bob Butler, Chairman

Ted Wooster, Vice Chairman

Liz Dinsmore, Friendship Select Board

(ABSENT) Terry Gifford, Waste Hauler, Waldoboro

John Higgins, Waldoboro Citizen

(ABSENT) Monika Magee, Cushing Citizen

Will Payson, Cushing Select Board

Bruce Prior, Cushing Hauler

Randy Robbins, Cushing Citizen