

# Learning to Talk Trash:

## Information about possible waste disposal and recycling models

### Prepared by Hingham's Long Range Waste Disposal Planning and Recycling Committee

The Board of Selectmen has asked the Long Range Waste Disposal Planning and Recycling Committee to look into different ways that Hingham could handle its waste and recycling, in order to improve the revenue situation for next year's town budget. There are no plans to change our current system, at this time, but the Selectmen are exploring options Hingham might have to increase revenue for 2011. Since the committee focuses on outreach and education related to waste disposal and recycling, we agreed to research how other towns manage these costs. To date, we've gathered information and analyzed how different towns finance their waste disposal and we've discussed how each method, or model, would impact our town, if it were used.

Now, we need your help. The Board of Selectmen has asked us to provide information to you, our town residents, about the models and ask for your input. We hope you will be willing to think about possible changes to our current system and share your thoughts. Below you will find summaries of five possible models.

Please keep the following in mind as you look through the models:

- The fees that towns charge residents for their waste disposal and recycling do not usually cover the full costs of these services, but do raise some revenue to offset some of the costs and the remainder is paid for from local taxes.
- We recognize that adding any new fees, for services that were formerly paid for entirely through tax revenue, will be a new financial burden for our town residents. However, these are the questions that we were asked to research: What ways might Hingham change its waste disposal and recycling operations in order to increase revenue to balance the town budget? and Which ways make the most sense to our town residents and are most supported by our town residents.
- Waste disposal has become increasingly complicated and expensive in recent years. As a town, we must comply with the Commonwealth's Waste Ban regulations. This means that we must keep a large number of things out of household and municipal waste and have alternative ways to process or recycle these materials. The following are **Waste Ban materials**: Paper and cardboard, plastic/glass/metal containers/bottles/cans, yard waste (wood, grass, leaves), construction waste (including all wood), used motor oil and antifreeze, lead and rechargeable batteries, anything containing mercury (thermometers, thermostats), fluorescent light bulbs and ballasts (including CFL's), any metal (e.g. appliances, propane tanks, metal pipe), tires, medical waste, TV's/monitors, and other electronics, and household hazardous waste (things containing hazardous chemicals, pesticides, etc). Some of these materials can be handled cheaply, while others have significant costs associated with their disposal. You will see that in the different models, the costs for processing and disposing of these materials are often different than for disposing of household waste.

After you have looked at the information provided about the models, we invite you to give us your input. We will include feedback from town residents in our report to the Board of Selectmen. There are two ways you can tell us what you think about the models:

- You can complete the "Talking Trash Survey" that will be up on the Town website from 10/25/10 until 11/4/10.

or

- You can attend our public meeting about the models on Wednesday 11/3/10 at 7pm in the Whiton Room of the Hingham Library.

We thank you for your help,

Long Range Waste Disposal Planning and Recycling Committee

## Curbside Collection (Town-Sponsored) Model

**Description:** Curbside pick-up of residential trash and recycling. The Transfer Station is closed to regular resident access. Pick-up service could be provided through the town contracting with a commercial waste disposal company or using town employees, or a hybrid of both. In most towns using this model, trash pick-up occurs once a week, while recycling pick up occurs every two weeks (either single stream where the following are mixed together: paper/cardboard/plastics/glass/metal bottles and cans OR dual stream where paper and cardboard are collected separately from mixed plastic/glass/metal bottles and cans).

**Towns using a Variation of this Model:** Weymouth, Braintree, Marshfield, Concord

### If Hingham Employed this Model

**Startup Costs:**

If town-run, would require purchasing/leasing of trash collection vehicles, collection containers for residents, and training for staff and residents. If outsourced, it would require collection containers for residents, and costs to select and enter into a contract with a commercial hauler.

**Range of Fees for this Service in Local Towns:** \$100 - \$275 per year. Note: These fees do not cover the full cost of the curbside service, additional revenue from taxes or other source are used (e.g. in Weymouth and Braintree remainder of cost covered through taxes and in Marshfield and Concord remainder is raised from Pay As You Throw programs – see PAYT model below).

**Benefits:**

- \*Would reduce cost of operating the transfer station – could be open only part time and only for Waste Ban items (see description above).
- \*More convenient for some residents (less sorting, no traveling to dispose of weekly household waste)

**Disadvantages:**

- \*Loss of service to residents (many items not accepted/separate fees charged)
- \*Visual impact of trash at curbside, especially in historic areas/Main St.
- \*Traffic congestion and noise impact of trash vehicles in neighborhoods.
- \*A new financial burden for residents
- \*No revenue to the town of Hingham for the sale of recycling commodities
- \*Not easy to enforce recycling- reduced recycling leads to increase costs for waste disposal

**Challenges to Implementation for Hingham:** Residents would likely be unhappy with the loss of access to the Transfer Station and the full range of materials that are accepted there. They are also likely to be unhappy with the traffic and noise impact of trash collection vehicles in neighborhoods.

**Ability to Raise Revenue for Hingham:** Low: This model will cost significantly more to run compared to resident drop-off at Transfer Station, so fees charged will only cover part of the costs.

**Anticipated Impact on Recycling Rates:** Negative: Compared to towns using other models, towns with curbside collection have lower recycling rates. Reduced recycling results in increased waste disposal costs.

## Flat Fee Model

**Description:** The Flat Fee model refers to a single annual fee charged to every residential household for use of the Transfer Station, usually a vehicle sticker fee for towns with drop off Transfer Stations. There may be additional fees for Waste Ban items (see description above) or the town may prohibit the disposal of such items at the facility and require residents to hire a commercial hauler to handle these items.

**Towns using a Variation of this Model:** Weston, Winchester, Barnstable, Scituate

### If Hingham Employed this Model

**Start-up Costs:** No changes to Transfer Station operations. A system for collecting annual fees and fees for Waste Ban items would be needed.

**Range of Fees for this Service:** \$130-\$215 per year per household. Note: in towns with lower fees, the fees cover only part of the costs of the waste and recycling operations and/or the towns also use a Pay As You Throw (PAYT) program (see next model) to further cover costs.

#### **Benefits:**

- \*Covers some of the Town's costs for waste disposal
- \*Simple to administer
- \*Can be used with PAYT (see description of that model below)
- \*Raises awareness about the costs of waste disposal

#### **Disadvantages:**

- \*Regressive fees – places same cost burden on all households regardless of number of residents and the amount of waste generated
- \*Likely negative impact on recycling – residents feel they have paid a fee to dispose of waste, so may not be inclined to sort out recycling
- \*A new financial burden for residents
- \*Decreased recycling yields increased waste disposal costs
- \*Not likely to cover all of town costs for waste disposal (to do so the fee would be unacceptably high)
- \*Very few towns have this model without a PAYT system in place

**Challenges to Implementation for Hingham:** Relatively easy to implement. Need to develop a method of charging yearly fee per household.

**Ability to Raise Revenue for Hingham:** Medium-High: This model can raise some or all costs of operating the Transfer Station but fees would need to be high to do so.

**Anticipated Impact on Recycling Rates:** Negative: Compared to towns using other models, towns with the flat fee model see less motivation for recycling which increases waste disposal costs.

## Pay As You Throw Model (PAYT)

**Description:** PAYT communities charge residents a disposal fee per unit of regular household waste (for example, \$2 for each 30 gallon trash bag, or \$1 for each 15 gallon trash bag). There is no fee for separated recyclables. There are fees for Waste Ban materials (see description of Waste Ban items above). Most PAYT communities with residential drop-off facilities use a system of PAYT bags and some also charge a yearly access or sticker fee per vehicle. Most communities have a two-tiered fee structure for residents with lower bag and sticker fees for seniors and low-income residents. A resident's costs rise or fall in direct relation to the amount of waste they dispose of and the amount of materials that they divert from the waste stream by recycling.

**Towns using a Variation of this Model:** Cohasset, Duxbury, Scituate, Needham

### **If Hingham Employed this Model**

**Start-up Costs:** Many steps involved in starting a PAYT program including arranging for bags and stores to sell bags, collecting bag revenues, and considerable education of residents about the program. No changes to Transfer Station staffing or lay-out would be needed. (Note: there is an option to contract with Waste Zero to start PAYT with no initial cost to the town – see Challenges section below)

**Range of Fees for this Service:** \$25-\$80/yearly access (sticker) fee, 1.50-\$2.00 per 30 gallon bag, 0.75-\$1.00 per 15 gallon bag, \$120-\$200 per ton for construction materials and bulky furniture, \$3-\$20 for other Waste Ban items (see description of Waste Ban items above).

#### **Benefits:**

- \*Would raise revenue through bag sales
- \*Shown to help raise recycling rates and reduce waste disposal costs
- \*Equitable way to charge for waste disposal (pay only for what you throw away)
- \*Residents can control their costs with choices (recycling, purchasing)

#### **Disadvantages:**

- \*Can lead to increased illegal dumping
- \*New financial burden for residents
- \*Residents can feel “nickel and dimed” by municipality

**Challenges to Implementation:** Typically there are multiple challenges to starting a PAYT program. However, Waste Zero (a company now working in MA) will do all the initial start-up work for a new PAYT program at no initial cost to the town. Their fee is paid from a portion of the bag sales revenue as it comes in. Possible initial increased roadside dumping may occur (it has in other towns) as residents attempt to avoid paying bag fees. Other towns have addressed this problem with video/police monitoring, additional pick-up of roadside trash by DPW, and fining of residents caught dumping illegally.

**Ability to Raise Revenue for Hingham:** Medium-High: medium if only PAYT is implemented (from bag sales) and high if a yearly access (sticker) fee is added.

**Anticipated Impact on Recycling Rates:** Positive: Recycling increases in towns using PAYT programs because there is a financial incentive to sort all recyclables (which are taken for free at the Transfer Station) from household waste that can only be disposed of in bags that cost \$1-2 each)

## Permitted Access with Itemized Fees Model

**Description:** Residents receive one free access permit (sticker) per household and pay a fee for additional vehicle stickers. Specific fees are charged to cover some of the Transfer Station expenses for specialized vendors to take Waste Ban items for processing. Most commonly, fees are charged for construction & demolition waste, bulky waste and Waste Ban items which by law are required to be removed from household waste and processed separately such as appliances, TV's and CRTs, other electronics and tires.

**Towns using a Variation of this Model:** Norwell, Hanover

### **If Hingham Employed this Model**

**Start-up Costs:**

Developing a system for paying for items with fees (Online/Credit card/Check)

**Range of Fees charged for this Service:**

C & D charged by volume or weight- \$120-\$200 per ton

Large furniture: Fridge, sofa, rugs, mattress- \$10-20 per item

CRT's/TV's/Microwaves- \$10-15 each Propane tanks- \$10-\$20

**Benefits:**

- \*Incremental addition of charges for waste disposal and recycling. No major overhaul
- \*Starts educating residents that waste disposal in the post landfill era is costly
- \*Charges only for those items that carry specific costs to dispose of or recycle
- \*Some ability to raise revenues for Hingham depending on how many items or materials have fees associated with their disposal

**Disadvantages:**

- \*Continues to hide total costs of waste disposal and recycling operations
- \*Does nothing to increase recycling and likely to have only a small impact on consumer choices re: waste generation
- \*Could lead to some off road dumping
- \*Negative impact on recycling possible due to residents combining waste and recycling/waste ban items into household trash to avoid fees
- \*New financial burden for residents

**Challenges to Implementation for Hingham:**

Developing a system of “tickets” to show that fees have been paid before materials are deposited at the Transfer Station. A fine system would need to be in place for those attempting to dispose of mandatory recyclables or Waste Ban items in the household trash area. Education of residents re: how much waste disposal costs and the costs involved to process Waste Ban materials.

**Ability to Raise Revenue for Hingham:** Low to medium: Revenues will depend on how many items have specific fees charged for their disposal.

**Anticipated Impact on Recycling Rates:** Neutral to negative: A possible backlash from residents about having to pay new fees could lead to attempts to hide some items in with household trash. A fine system would need to be in place from the start.

## Private Hauler Model

**Description:** Residents would be required to contract with a private hauling company to pick up their trash and recyclables. Typically trash pick-up is weekly and recyclables are collected every other week. Typically, bulky waste (furniture, rugs), appliances, TV's, computers, yard waste, and other Waste Ban items are not included in your service contract, and/or would have additional costs.

**Private Hauling Service Companies that Service Hingham:** Waste Management, Inc.; Dumpster Depot; Gilbert Trash & Recycling

### **If Hingham Employed this Model**

**Startup Costs:** None for Town of Hingham

**Range of Fees for this Service:** \$344 - \$704 per year for trash and recycling by the 3 companies surveyed. Waste Ban items have additional fees.

**Benefits:**

- \*Possible lower taxes, if Transfer Station taken out of DPW's operating budget.
- \*Town is relieved of residential solid municipal waste and recycling management responsibilities.
- \*Decreased residential and commercial traffic to and from current Transfer Station

**Disadvantages:**

- \*Loss of service at the Transfer Station.
- \*A new financial burden for residents: cost per household for trash and recycling will be more than current per household cost for Transfer Station.
- \*Additional costs for yard waste and other Waste Ban items
- \*Lower recycling rates (customers pay additional fees for recycling).
- \*Possible increase in DPW costs due to illegal dumping and litter.
- \*Increased truck traffic throughout Hingham.
- \*Waste of current infrastructure at the Transfer Station.
- \*No revenue from recycling commodities for the town of Hingham
- \*Waste ban items might be mixed with solid waste and Hingham would lose the ability to enforce this ban.

**Challenges to Implementation for Hingham:** Some residents may be unhappy with the loss of local "self-service" and choice of days for trash and recycling and some residents may also be displeased by the visual, noise and traffic impacts of trash and recycling collection vehicles in neighborhoods.

**Ability to Raise Revenue for Hingham:** High: This model does not raise revenue but could remove full costs of Transfer Station from town budget.

**Anticipated Impact on Recycling Rates:** Negative: Compared to towns using other models, towns with curbside collection have lower recycling rates. Unless town changes its regulations for commercial waste disposal companies who operate in town, there is no way to insure that recycling is offered and that Waste Ban items are being removed from household waste.

We thank you for considering these models for Hingham. We look forward to getting your input about the options. You can give us your thoughts in the following ways:

- You can complete the "Talking Trash Survey" that will be up on the Town website from 10/25/10 until 11/4/10. You will find a link to the survey on this website on 10/25 or go to News and Announcements on the Town of Hingham's home page to find the link.
- Or You can attend our public meeting about the models on Wednesday 11/3/10 at 7pm in the Whiton Room of the Hingham Library.

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