

Haddam Sustainability Committee

August 25, 2021

Attendance: Daniel Ardila, Kristin Battistoni, Tom Kobylenski, Joanne Nesti, John Nork, Mary Nork, Sandra Olsen, Gail Reynolds, Linda Talbott

Kristin Battistoni called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was said by all. Mary Nork made a motion to approve the Agenda which was seconded by Joanne Nesti. Joanne Nesti reported the minutes of the July 28 meeting needed to be amended as follows: Kate Anderson is a Second Selectwoman, not a First as was originally written. Secretary Linda Talbott will make the correction. A motion to accept the corrected minutes was made by Mary Nork and seconded by Joanne Nesti.

Food Waste Diversion Project:

Linda Talbott passed out three spreadsheets which included information that Jenn White initiated regarding research she and Linda did on Biowaste facilities that compost food scraps as well as Compostable Biowaste haulers.

In summary: Quantum Biopower in Southington is the closest facility to us that takes food scraps and composts them in an environmentally clean way. There is another anaerobic digester to be built also in Southington but as of March 2021, it hasn't been built yet. There are only 2 vendors out of the 10 waste haulers Linda and Jenn contacted who are willing to come to Haddam to collect food waste and they are Blue Earth Compost, based in Hartford and Curbside Compost, based in Ridgefield. There is a third possibility of Willi Waste, based in Willimantic, however, they have just merged with Casella Waste based in VT and are not ready to do any pricing or expansion at this time. They do presently collect food waste from UConn and Eastern Ct University.

Linda multiplied out the costs for Blue Earth and Curbside based on the information Sam King provided at the presentation he gave us and also for Curbside based on information they gave to Jenn White in an email and those were included in 2 spreadsheets comparing their costs to the \$93/ton we presently pay. The committee acknowledges there will be upfront costs to get this project going. The tipping fees of hauling our waste away are only going to go up after MIRA trash to energy plant closes in July of 2022. It should be noted that Blue Earth's pick up fee for transfer station food bins (which they supply) is \$30/week, plus \$5.00 per bin service fee, plus optional \$1 per bin cleaning fee. Curbside charges \$95/week pick up fee, plus \$5 per bin service fee.

Linda also presented information after she spoke to Larry Bonin, the Old Saybrook Public Works Director about their food waste program. Originally their workers were hauling their food waste, collected at the transfer station in 55 gallon drums, to a pig farm in Waterford where the food scraps were steamed and fed to their pigs. When the pig farm wanted to start charging Old Saybrook a fee, they changed course. Old Saybrook has an old transfer station they converted into a leaf dump. Food waste is collected at the new transfer station in the 55 gallon drums and then brought by their staff over to the leaf dump, where it is buried in the leaves and composted. Towns people can go there in the spring and fall and take the compost if they wish. Linda has asked Gail Reynolds, who teaches the Master Gardening program at the UConn extension center, if she would come and talk to the committee about Community Composting. Gail has agreed to do so at the September meeting.

Sustainable CT is running a webinar on composting on August 27 at 10 am which requires pre-registration, however it will be posted on their website for people to view for free later.

Committee members said they would like to hear about Community composting from Gail. Even if we don't go that route, just having that knowledge would be helpful.

Subcommittees: Linda suggested subcommittee for financing this project which could include fundraising, applying for grants (Lee Sawyer, DEEP, Rock fall). Kristin Battistoni volunteered to do fundraising as she felt the community would own this project more if they donated money toward it. Town money might be available toward the end of the fiscal year in July 2022. Costs for this project include signage at the transfer station, possible purchase of starter kits which consist of a 2 gallon counter top bin, a 6 gallon weekly food scrap bin, a roll of 25 compostable bags and a brochure as to what/how to compost and what not to compost. These kits cost \$20 plus shipping. Joanne Nesti asked if Blue Earth could do curbside pick up in Haddam(like they do in larger, more densely populated towns like West Hartford, Avon etc). Linda reported that Middletown Recycling Director, Essex Sustainability Co Chairs all felt that the transfer station model of food scrap pick up would work the best in this spread out large area rural town. However, Linda will ask Blue Earth if they supply small countertop type food scrap bins people could buy.

Following all the Food scrap diversion discussion, Kristin Battistoni suggested Assistant Director of Public Works , Chris Corsa get formal quotes from Blue Earth Compost and Curbside Compost. Linda will forward the informal quote information to Chris. A suggestion was made that this be a Pilot Program and perhaps we could do some community composting along with a transfer station food waste program, or trial a vendor program for 6 months and see what the community response is and if not good, try Community Composting.

Pete's waste pick up costs \$35/month. It was noted that his hauling fees as well as the Town of Haddam's will also increase once MIRA closes. Ours have already gone up from \$91/ton to \$93/ton. Tom Kobylenski agreed that burning trash (as in MIRA trash to energy plant) is not helpful for the environment. The state of CT seems to be moving away from trash to energy plants as the Wallingford WTE has closed and MIRA is due to close next summer.

Old Business:

Kristin reported that Haddam is a member of Sustainable CT. They have a point system for sustainable town projects like the food waste project, community gardens, pollinator gardens, solar energy, affordable housing . Kristin and Joann Ricciardelli(the First Selectman's Assistant) met with Sustainable CT interns. There is a list of areas the town can participate in and Kristin will report on these at a later meeting.

New Business:

Mary Nork questioned restarting the soft plastic recycling. Kristin explained that it has restarted and there is a shed behind the town hall where townspeople can bring their plastic. She weighs and marks it and volunteers take it to Stop and Shop in the bottle can room. It then is shipped to TREX and 500lbs in 6 months will get us another Trex bench for the town. Since Kristin started this program we have collected 3 ton of plastic ! However, it is time consuming . The Transfer Station no longer wants the soft plastic bins there.

Dan Ardila reported that in South America they take a 2 L coke bottle and can put about 150 bags of soft plastic inside each one. We cannot do that here because Trex won't take the hard plastic (coke bottle). Dan will investigate the name of that company and will see if there is something comparable in the states.

Dan is also thinking of ways to help make Haddam more self-sustaining by perhaps partnering with Quantum Biopower somehow. He would like to see a newspaper or bulletin on recycled paper telling the town what we are doing. Kristin will be working with Jenn White on a technology SubCommittee to update the Sustainability Committee web site , set up a Facebook page and all information/educational materials can be posted there. Articles can be written in the Haddam-Killingworth News. Also in South America, per Dan they have a booklet called The Green Book that lists professionals and contractors who use environmentally favorable products in their businesses or services and he would like to work on that for Middlesex county and beyond.

Dan also noted that electricity in our state is very expensive and we need to decrease our carbon footprint with things like solar energy.

Gail Reynolds explained that 7 years ago there was a big push statewide for solar energy and Haddam was one of the towns that achieved a good percentage of people who opted for solar on their homes. It was suggested that Dan meet with Jeff Lord (solar expert)who is on this committee regarding a possible community solar program in Haddam.

Gail Reynolds talked about being contacted by St. Peter's Church wanting to set up a Community Garden, however it wouldn't be open to the public, so she declined. There is a model garden in front of the UConn Extension Center whose produce goes toward St Vincent DePaul Place.

It was suggested that maybe a Community garden could be done on Jail Hill behind the Annex Building which houses Social Services and the Food Bank. Jessica Condil, the Social Services Director used to have a small garden there. Interestingly, when the jail was active, the inmates used to work in gardens in that area. Pollinator Pathways are more of a grassroots project that several Shoreline towns are doing. There is one also in East Haddam.

Parmelee Farm in Killingworth has a great community garden. Wellstone Farm has stopped their CSA program.

John Nork has agreed to videotape our meetings which could then be streamed to Channel 18.

An article could be written in October about establishing a Community Garden in Haddam.

A Special Meeting of the Haddam Sustainability Committee will be held at 5:30 pm on Wednesday September 22,2021 so that Gail Reynolds can be there to present to us information of Community Composting. Kristin Battistoni may be in California that week and if so, Linda Talbott will run the meeting. It has to be designated a Special Meeting because of the time change . Gail is Chair of the Conservation Commission which also meets at 7 pm on the 4th Wednesday of the month, so she will present at 5:30 and then leave when she has to.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mary Nork and seconded by Linda Talbott. The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Talbott, Secretary