

Sustainability Committee Special Meeting

September 22, 2021 5:30pm

Old Town Hall 21 Field Park Drive Haddam, CT

Attendance: Daniel Ardila, Jeff Lord, Sarah Neal, Joanne Nesti, John Nork, Mary Nork, Gail Reynolds, Linda Talbott, Jennifer White.

The meeting was called to order by Linda Talbott at 5:43 pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was said by all.

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Joanne Nesti and seconded by Gail Reynolds and passed unanimously. A motion to accept the August 25, 2021 minutes was made by Joanne and seconded by Gail and also passed.

Gail Reynolds was the guest speaker on the topic of **Community Composting** and her section of the meeting was videotaped by John Nork with mutual agreement between John and Gail.

Gail outlined three types of composting: Home, Community, Industrial.

Composting involves the management of decomposition of organic materials and involves the chemicals of carbon and benzene. Composting removes solid waste from the trash stream and can be used as mulch and improves soil quality in gardens by increasing pore space to allow water to infiltrate correctly.

Scales of Composting:

Community: should be located on a site near a municipal building

Compost recipe: Food scraps, fresh leaves, grass clippings, manure= Nitrogen based ((greens); Dried leaves, newspapers, wood chips, sawdust, straw=Carbon based (browns). Need 25-30 parts Carbon to 1 part Nitrogen based materials

She outlined the NYC Composting Project and gave the committee a print out of their Master Composting Manual.

Organic waste intake: needs to be prepared correctly: food needs to be chopped up so microbes that break it down have multisurfaces on which to work, needs to be mixed in correct proportion of browns to greens and then put into composting bins.

Active multiple compost bins: need a water supply and need to be turned periodically. Bins need to be aerated. Making pallet bins could be a good option as the slats usually have spaces between them. Can have compost after about 6-8 weeks.

Final station: The compost can be moved to a final bin and after the compost gets really hot (temp can be measured) it needs to sit and cure. No turning or watering of the compost occurs in this stage. When it has finished curing, set it aside for 3 days. If it smells like ammonia, it needs more time. It then needs to be sifted: pine cones, fruit stickers, pits won't decompose, so they can be sifted out.

Labor intensive: Trained volunteers needed or perhaps a paid person for overall management as volunteers tend to peter out. Need to plan, implement and manage an appropriate site, and have adequate feedstock available. Compost should be weighed, need record keeping with dates for how long it takes for composting to happen. Need to communicate with neighbors, as can have bad odors if not composting correctly. Rodents, deer and bears need to be managed with appropriate fencing and lids or covers on the compost bins.

Garden Club might be good source for volunteers for a small scale Community Project, as well as the Haddam Junior Women's club and scouts troops. It was suggested maybe High School students could be involved for their Community Service projects if we had a compost project.

Gail said we would need a permit from DEEP depending on the size of the project.

Industrial: There is an industrial site in Ellington. The industrial composters can decompose animals such as cows and horses!

What is best for Haddam?

Gail suggested the Blue Earth Compost project might be a way to start because it may be easier in terms of personnel involved. The composting is done off site. However, a small compost operation might be able to also go on at the same time.

Linda Talbott mentioned that a Community Garden possibility was raised at the last committee meeting and it was suggested then it might go behind the Annex Building and the produce could go toward the food bank. Perhaps some composting could be done in conjunction with that.

Gail said Parmelee Farm in Killingworth has a Community Garden. Mary Salara and Jaime Burgess might be contacts for starting one in Haddam.

Resources: DEEP Composting and Organics Recycling

Sustainable CT posted a composting webinar

UConn Home and Garden

Cornell Composting

Gail gave Linda a copy of NYC Master Composting manual

E.coli per Gail can be controlled if the compost gets hot enough, tends to be there with manures.

Following Gail's excellent presentation discussion was held regarding the videotaping of Committee Meetings. Jeff Lord stated that BOS meetings and other boards outlined in the Bylaws have to be videotaped, but he thinks that committees that are appointed (such as Sustainability) do not and the BOS needs to know a) if they are being videotaped and b) the committee as a whole must vote on whether or not to do so. Linda halted the videotaping after Gail's presentation and she will discuss with

Kristin Battistoni and Bob McGarry on this issue. The videotaping of Gail's composting presentation was done as an educational lesson so it could be referenced if a group wants to do Community Composting.

Food Waste Diversion Project:

Linda reported on Durham/Middlefield Blue Earth Compost Project which started September 4. In 3 weeks they had 50 people sign up. Housatonic Resources Recovery Authority (hrra) based in Brookfield will hold a pallet of 100 2 gallon counter top, 100 6 gallon weekly bins and 9 cases of compostable bags to line them with and will sell them to us for cost of \$1532.67. The CEO there will even give them to us with a letter from Bob McGarry stating the town will eventually pay for them. This cost is \$1000 less than what Essex paid for starter kits. We would sell them to the community to increase compliance with this project for \$20 or \$25 per kit.

Linda reported Assistant Public Works Director, Chris Corsa, has met with Sam King (from Blue Earth) at the Transfer Station and has a formal quote for a 6 month Blue Earth Compost Pilot Project starting with 3 bins. Chris prefers that program as he doesn't have the staff or the room at the transfer station to do a Community Compost project similar to Old Saybrook's. He plans to have Public Works clear a space behind the Swap Shack for parking and the bins. He plans to put the bins inside the Swap Shack at night for animal control and plans to build a wall inside the shack to separate the two spaces. Volunteers may be needed in the beginning as well as Transfer Station staff to monitor this program. Jeff suggested High School students could do their Community Service project by volunteering at the food bins and the High School Sustainability Club students may also be interested in volunteering. Linda will check with Chris to see if he will allow volunteers.

6 month costs for 3 bins: \$30 pickup fee x 26 weeks=\$780; \$5 service fee/bin x 3 x 26 weeks=\$390; \$1 x 3 bins cleaning fee x 26 weeks=\$78. Adding all = \$1248 to pay Blue Earth for 3 bins x 6 months. Fees will go up, if the program takes off and more bins have to be added.

Signage (quote from Sign Mart Middletown): \$610

100 starter kits: \$1532.67

Post card (4 x 6) mailers to 3800 households about the project: \$295; 5.5 x 8.5=\$495

Brochures explaining the program to be placed in the starter kits: need to develop and get price from Vista Print.

Total **excluding brochures**: \$3685.67 to \$3885.67. **Stickers** might be needed to put on the kits also.

Jenn White questioned whether or not there was a mandate that food scraps be removed from municipal waste stream. Linda reiterated that tipping fees keep going up: Haddam was at \$91/ton, now \$93/ton and when MIRA Trash to Energy closes July 1, 2022, the tipping fees of the 70 towns that use MIRA will certainly go higher, maybe even double. Unclear if there is a mandate from the Governor. Jenn asked about the anaerobic digester that Stamford is using. Linda reported that per the Sustainable CT

Compost webinar, Stamford paid something like \$30,000 for their first one, but now want to upgrade to a 500lb one which costs \$50,000 and there is a high electricity cost to run these machines. Jeff Lord reported that those machines are not effective at all.

Upon further discussion, Jeff Lord made a motion to have Linda draft a written bullet point paper on the reasoning behind why removing food scraps is of benefit and the research that has been done and present that at the next BOS meeting October 12. Committee members can put in their feedback as it will be available on Sustainability Google Docs. Joanne Nesti seconded it.

Linda will find out if the Town contributes money, will Sustainable CT match that.

Jeff Lord suggested maybe the fundraising could be tied to a Shred It Event. Linda will ask Kristin this. He is also concerned that there will be safe and easy traffic flow around the new area for the bins.

New Business:

Dan Ardila suggested ways to handle hard plastic containers with perhaps reverse vending machines at schools for cans, bottles and other plastics. He would like to see ways to separate the single stream recyclables to monetize them. He wants to keep plastics out of the mixed stream recyclables. Linda gave him an article about hard plastics that was in the newest issue of Consumer Reports.

There was a Hartford Courant article about problems with glass in the single stream recycling that Joanne Nesti sent to Kristin which was attached to the minutes recently sent out. Linda explained that we may have to separate glass out of the mixed stream as it becomes contaminated and broken and cannot therefore be used in a recycling process. Jeff Lord will contact MIRA to see where all the recycling goes.

Jenn White has done a great job updating the Sustainable Haddam web page. We are now on Facebook (Sustainability Committee, Town of Haddam) and Instagram. Thank you Jenn! She reported also committee now has an email address HaddamSustainabilityCommittee@gmail.com. Members may collaborate the Google Docs. That is where the draft of BOS presentation will be. Jenn white asked any interested members to contact her via email to request the document link.

Joanne Nesti made a motion to adjourn with second by Jeff Lord. The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 pm.

The next meeting will be October 27, 2021 at 7 pm at the Old Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted

Linda Talbott, Secretary