

Haddam Sustainability Committee meeting

July 28, 2021

Committee member attendance: Daniel Ardila, Kristin Battistoni, Sue Kautz, Joanne Nesti, Sandra Olsen, Gail Reynolds, Teresa Resnick, Linda Talbott, Jenn White.

Additional townspeople were present.

Kristin Battistoni called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Kristin wished to modify the agenda to add the Pledge of Allegiance.

The agenda was approved by motion made by Gail Reynolds and seconded by Linda Talbott.

The Pledge of Allegiance was said by all in attendance.

Joanne Nesti made a motion to accept the June 23, 2021 minutes and it was seconded by Jenn White.

Sam King of Blue Earth Compost was introduced by Linda Talbott.

Sam related that Blue Earth was started in Hartford in 2013 with small residential 4 gallon bins that he drove around in his VW hatchback. It has now expanded to trucks servicing several municipalities in CT as well as other corporations such as the Adams Supermarket chain, Wesleyan and others.

The company has received several awards for what they do. 70 towns in CT use MIRA (Materials Innovation and Recycling Authority) based in Hartford for waste and the trash to energy plant there is going to close in July of 2022. 20-25% of waste is food. Food waste is heavier than the rest of trash due to water content in food. After this portion of MIRA closes next year, the waste will have to be trucked out of state to? Virginia, Pennsylvania, etc. and the towns who use MIRA will see an increase in their tipping costs. Haddam uses MIRA.

Blue Earth Compost's Feed the Earth program: partners with municipalities to take food waste to an anaerobic digester company in Southington called Quantum Biopower who is a partner with Blue Earth Compost. Quantum hyper accelerates the food breakdown so that in 21 days it creates compost and also this facility is environmentally friendly in that it captures all the methane produced by this process, burns it internally and creates electricity enough to power 750 homes in Southington. They do sell the compost wholesale to commercial garden centers like Scott's.

Middletown started in May with Blue Earth providing and maintaining food bins to the restaurants in the Sanitation District which is basically Main Street. 15 restaurants are presently being serviced there.

Middletown is also using transfer station bins as well. This is what makes sense for Haddam per Sam King. Essex is doing transfer station bins with BE. Branford is doing a combination of transfer station bins and curbside pickup for one of their densely populated shoreline neighborhoods.

He outlined general costs to our town as follows: 60-70 households: \$2500 a year; 200 households: \$5000 a year; 500 households \$9000 a year based on that each household generates an average of 10-12# of food waste/week.

He suggests 32 gallon bins which are easier for his crew to manage.

Included in the fee quoted is his haul fee of \$30/week, environmental control fee of \$5 and \$1 cleaning fee. BE supplies a liner for each bin. He said to break even we would need 200 households to participate.

Discussion was held regarding if there are contamination issues with people throwing nonfood waste into the bins. Some supervision by transfer station staff may be necessary. Chris Corsa, the Assistant Public works Director said if the town goes ahead with this project, he plans to put the bins inside the

swap shack at night so animals don't get into them. He also said the present fees for Transfer Station passes of \$75 and \$50 (for seniors) comes nowhere near what it costs to run the Transfer Station. Perhaps higher pass fees could offset the startup costs for this project. We pay \$91/ton for garbage trash to be hauled away. In May 135 tons were hauled from Haddam. The Transfer Station would not allow restaurants to bring their food waste in per Chris Corsa. The restaurants have private haulers and perhaps if they see this program be successful, might want to enter into a contract with Blue Earth for their food waste. DEEP would have to issue a permit for the food waste bins in our Transfer Station.

Blue Earth Compost provides the town with a monthly report which includes number of bins, weight of the food waste, EPA tangible environmental benefits. He said there are other similar anaerobic digester facilities in various stages of development in the State of CT.

Blue Earth plans to get its first electric vehicle next year. Sam isn't concerned about gas prices going up and down.

Abraham Hilding-Salorio did a remote presentation. He is from Sustainable CT which is a non-profit organization based out of Eastern Connecticut State University's Institute for Sustainable Energy. Sustainable CT provides funding for public; sustainability related projects like food scrap diversion. He said a simple fund raising campaign could be set up. His organization can work with us to set up a crowd funding campaign. They match funds raise so if we needed \$5000 and the town raised \$2500, Sustainable CT would match the other \$2500. This would be a onetime grant for this particular project, but if the committee wanted to do another project that met their criteria for sustainability, another fund raising and matching grant would be available. Ideas such as Pollinator Gardens, Community Gardens, Municipal Building energy efficiency projects, Municipal solar panels, Arts and Culture projects could all be available for Sustainable CT matching grants. After the first year of this project, the funds needed would be built into the town budget, probably Transfer Station budget.

He mentioned that Stamford has purchased a composter machine at a cost of \$30,000 which takes in about 100 lbs. of food waste/day. However, there are high operating costs for this machine.

Joanne Nesti asked if a municipality can do crowd funding legally. Abe said if it is a public project where the goal is something accessible to the public, it is legal. First Selectwoman Kate Anderson said the town has done fund raising in the past.

Kristin Battistoni asked what kind of fund raising do towns do? Abe said on line fund raising with credit cards on a Crowd funding page. Some suggestions: waive the transfer station fee if they donate to this crowd funding project, or have a raffle for a free permit, maybe donate a compost counter top bin if they donate. He agreed we can fund raise anyway we want to bake sale, fundraise at Farmers Market, etc. The crowd sourcing so far has had a 90% success rate. Patronicity is the fund raising platform that will help us put it together. They take a 5% fee.

A question was asked if this is IRS compliant. Per Abe usually if a donation is greater than or equal to \$250, a receipt would be necessary. Under this amount a donor would have to ask for a receipt. When you log donors with Patronicity, send photos of checks or the cash laid out on a table.

After the presentations, Teresa Resnick and Jenn White were calculating numbers in regard to the cost of the Blue Earth project. Both planned to do this at home later.

The committee, following the presentations, agreed that we weren't ready to vote on this project yet and are not yet ready to send anything to the Board of Selectmen. We also questioned as to whether the Board of Finance needed to be involved. We need firmer numbers on potential startup costs and the committee needs to digest all that was presented tonight. The BOS may also need other vendors to be compared to Blue Earth or perhaps other options.

Old Business:

Linda Talbott can't do the Farmer's Market this Friday July 30. Daniel Ardilo and Tom Kobylenski will let Linda know later this evening if they can do it.

Kate Anderson made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Linda Talbott. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm.

The next meeting is August 25, 2021 at 7pm.

Respectfully submitted
Linda Talbott