

Sustainability Committee, Town of Haddam

Meeting Minutes : May 12, 2021

GoTo Meeting attended by: Kate Anderson, Kristin Battistoni, Helen Holland, Susan Kautz, Sarah Neal, Joanne Nesti, Teresa Resnick, Gail Reynolds, Linda Talbott, and Jenn White. Jeff Lord submitted an email which was read to the group.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 by Kristin Battistoni who asked those present to outline areas of interest they might wish to pursue or address as part of this committee.

Selectwoman and Economic Development Commission Chairperson, Kate Anderson, discussed the potential cost increase of garbage disposal, cost of running the Transfer Station, wanting more education to the public on how to use the Transfer Station, look into grants and ways to make waste removal more sustainable.

Linda Talbott outlined Blue Earth Compost which is based in Hartford and collects food waste from residential and commercial entities and delivers it to Quantum Biopower of Southington where it is converted into compost and/or Biogas. Middletown has recently contracted with Blue Earth to provide free receptacles for food waste for businesses in their sanitation district. They will also be including the hospitals and schools. There is a fee for all of this, but potential for reducing food waste which would lessen garbage costs at the Transfer Station and additional garbage haul away costs which could be incurred when the MIRA Trash to Energy plant closes in 2022 may be offset. However, more information would be needed to decide if this is viable or too expensive to pursue.

Gail Reynolds chairs the Conservation Commission and is the Middlesex County Extension Center Coordinator and teaches the Master Gardener program and composting programs. Gail is interested in educating the public on sound gardening practices and on eliminating invasive species. She has contacts in East Lyme whose town got some grants from Sustainability CT and will look into that. She also might be able to use the outside grounds at the UConn Extension Center where she works to do a composting education session.

Joanne Nesti, a member of the Regional District 17 BOE and previous chair of same, feels the Transfer Station fees are a great bargain for townspeople, but wants more supervision of how people are using the Transfer Station and also all the recycling that is done there. She wants to find out what happens to all the trash after it leaves our Transfer Station. Kristin suggested that she will have Christopher Corsa, Public Works Assistant Director come to the next meeting to discuss Transfer Station issues with the committee. Joanne wants to know if what we are doing at the Transfer Station is working and where does all the recycling go?

Susan Kautz expressed some interest in Blue Earth related to finding out cost. She has contacted Covanta which is a Trash to Energy facility located in Bristol to seek out information from them and will pursue them. She feels the textile recycling we do in Haddam is a good cause.

Teresa Resnick is very interested in promoting the Textile recycling we are doing and wants to educate students in Regional District 17 about that aspect. She brought up the fact that the town actually earns money from textile recycling and this also helps third world countries. She wants better signage at the Transfer Station as most people don't know that ripped, stained textiles can be recycled and shouldn't be thrown away. There are also textile recycling bins at the Annex Building on Jail Hill Road. She also wants to learn more about composting.

Sarah Neal wants consumers to not purchase so many things that are packaged in plastic. Micro plastics are present in fleeces for instance, so she would like to educate more people on decreasing plastic uses. She would like to see elimination of single use plastic water bottles.

Jenn White lives on a farm off Rte 81 that practices permaculture. She has organized E-cycling events through Middlesex Community College and is also interested in educating the public on sustainability issues to raise awareness. She was told there are buildings available in town to hold workshops. Youngster and Burr Elementary student Helen Holland has written a letter to First Selectmen Bob McGarry regarding her focus on eliminating littering in town. She and her father would like trash and recycling bins to be located at hiking Trail Heads and maybe little bins and trash bags to take with you when you hike so you can pick up trash you may encounter. Helen wants to have a cleanup day at her school and at parks. Kristin suggested initiating a competition with the High School, Middle/Intermediate School and Elementary School for a cleanup day at Haddam Meadows. The family suggested trash bins at Haddam Meadows, but it was pointed out this is a State park and the state would have to empty and maintain them.

Teresa read the email Jeff Lord sent as he apologized for not being able to attend. He wants clearer signage at the Transfer Station in the area of container electronics, clear directions about disposal of Lithium ion vs alkaline batteries, CFL bulbs. More signage about proper recycling and disposal at the transfer station. He wants a regular campaign to educate townspeople and to include information that teachers can use in the classroom to educate students.

Kristin Battistoni reported that in the Town Hall there is a box for recycled plastic, a box for razor blades, used American flags, cell phones, and box for Head and Shoulders product containers to recycle with Teracycle. People can recycle soft plastic (not black plastic) at Stop and Shop in where you recycle plastic bottles and cans there are white boxes for the soft plastic. The Town Hall has a shed in the back where the plastic can be weighed and then brought to Stop and Shop. Kristin can be notified as we have had a program with Trex which is where the soft plastic is shipped. She pointed out that other bins for recycled soft plastic prior to Covid were placed around town in the pharmacy and inside the library, at the grocery stores and at the Transfer Station, but presently the plastics box is only at the Town Hall. The compost project behind the Town hall is only for Town Hall employees, but it getting to be too much to manage. She mentioned there is a Lee Sawyer Grant that we might be able to apply for to purchase signage.

Kristin wanted to make the Annual Pumpkin Run a Zero Waste run. She and her husband run in one in Washington DC that is zero waste. They place garbage bins in key places with people to man them so appropriate food waste goes in them. They separate the granola bars from their wrappers, etc. Plastic water bottles are used in most runs and those are separated from food waste and recycled.

Kristin reported the Boy Scouts reached out and want to do an electronics seminar.

Kristin briefly outlined that Haddam joined Sustainability CT which lists a host of projects towns can do to earn points toward, Gold, Silver and Bronze designations. All projects that meet their criteria have to be downloaded to their site in certain time frames.

Kristin stated we need to formally form a Sustainability Committee and those who want to be on it will need to be voted in by the Board of Selectmen. Everyone attending tonight's meeting agreed to be on it. Kristin does not have the time to chair this committee, but no one came forward to volunteer to be the chair. Kristin may therefore delegate if no one comes forward. Linda Talbott volunteered to be secretary.

The group decided to meet once a month, hopefully in person. Kate said to avoid the second week of the month as too many town committee/departments meetings seem to occur then.

Kristin adjourned the meeting at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Linda Talbott