

SELECT BOARD MEETING

THURSDAY, June 15, 2023 7:00 PM

The GREAT HALL, 10 PEARL ST., 3rd Floor

10 Pearl Street, Stoughton, MA 02072

& VIRTUALLY via GOOGLE.MEETS

In accordance with Governor Baker's declaration of June 16, 2021 granting certain pandemic-related authorizations to Public Board and Town meetings and recently extended until March 30, 2025, this meeting will be conducted both in person and virtually via Google Meets.

A comprehensive record of the proceedings will be posted on the Town's website and/or SMAC as soon as possible after the meeting if live broadcast or livestreaming is unsuccessful. Times are approximate and items may be taken out of order at the discretion of the Chair.

Present: Debra Roberts, Chair, Stephen Cavey Vice Chair, Scott Carrara, Louis Gitto, Joseph Mokrisky (remotely).

Also present: Tom Calter, Town Manager.

Open Session- Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Roberts called the meeting to order at 7:08 PM. The motion to open the meeting was made by Mr. Gitto and seconded by Mr. Carrara. The motion passed.

Members Roberts, Cavey, Carrara, Gitto and Mokrisky responded present to the roll call. Chair Roberts read into the record Governor's Baker declaration on Open Meetings.

Chair Roberts asked all to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Roberts explained procedures to be followed during the meeting, asking each speaker from the audience to limit their remarks to 3 minutes.

Mr. Carrara made the motion to continue the public hearing to consider Water/Sewer/Solid Waste rates, policies, practices procedures and operations. Motion seconded by Vice Chair Cavey. The motion passed.

Presentation from Town Manager Calter, Marc Tisdelle and Paul Giffune.

Town Manager Calter stated that over the last 4-5 weeks a committee comprised of Marc Tisdelle, Paul Giffune, Mary Jane Martin, Larry Langlois and Louis Gitto, had reviewed the current practices and concluded that the structural deficit of \$865,156 needed to be addressed. This deficit has been funded with general operating monies. There are tools to correct the situation:

- a. increase annual base rate
- b. get out of the business/privatize
- c. close the structural deficit by accepting the services of Waste Zero.

Town Manager Calter listed the following objectives:

- 1. extinguish the structural deficit
- 2. maximize employee safety
- 3. meet environmental changes
- 4. balance the cost with usage
- 5. prioritize Town beautification on trash day

Town Manager Calter asked the group to listen with an open mind and to be aware that to do nothing would have a serious impact on the Town's bond rating. Moody's Investors' Services, Inc. had done a review and warned of a downgrade, the potential for the Town to lose its double A rating. Such a downgrade would make funding for the fire station, new schools and a police station difficult to obtain.

Town Manager Calter thanked Gilda Pereira, for translating the documents in Portuguese on her own time.

Town Manager Calter presented slides of trash pick-up, remarking that Stoughton is one of the last communities to look so poorly on trash day. People are aware that Stoughton will pick up anything, so they leave sofas, tables, chairs etc. at the curb. The Town proposes a charge to the owner to pick up such waste. He noted that 75% of the solid waste comes from multi-families.

Marc Tisdelle pointed out a chart that indicated deficits from FY21 (\$748,315) FY23 (\$740,422) FY23 (incomplete). Projected for FY23 (\$855,136). The current rates are:

5,262 regular customers currently pay:	annual \$254.00	quarterly \$63.50	weekly \$4.88
1,554 senior customers (25% discount) pay:	annual \$190.52	quarterly \$47.63	weekly \$3.66

Marc Tisdelle pointed out that historically, there have been no rate increases since 2016 other than a minimal increase in 2018 at 1.60%. The current flat rate structure permits limitless curbside pickups. There are out-of-town people abusing the system. Marc Tisdelle also noted that currently there is no charge for recycling. He finds the Town should increase the base rate, changing the operational approach.

The Town wants to address:

- 1, extinguish the solid waste structural deficit, and eliminate use of free cash.
2. improve Town's financial strength as measured by Moody's Investors' Services.
(eliminate subsidies, increase cash reserves). Continuing to use free cash reduces Town's ability to borrow.
3. improve roadways, cleanliness and overall appearance of the Town aesthetics.
4. reduce Stoughton's per capita municipal solid waste usage (from the average 740,000 tons annually to 50,000 tons).
5. substantially increase recycling while reducing the use of landfills and incineration.
6. capture hundreds of thousands of dollars from State grants for recycling program.

Short Term solutions:

1. separate household rubbish from solid waste.
2. establish a transportation and disposal fee for non-household rubbish.
3. pick-up fee for non-recyclable items.
4. use standardized bags 15 or 33 gallons cost 65.00 to 104.00 annually.
5. partner with Waste Zero in transforming waste reduction goals into measurable savings.
6. increase resident awareness of policies, coaching and education.

Town Manager Calter introduced three guests to speak: Mark Dancy, Waste Zero, Missy Hollenback, MassDEP, Robert Moylan, Commissioner of Public Works and Parks, City of Worcester with 40 years of experience.

Mark Dancy, representative of Waste Zero stated that he has 30 years of experience. The State of Massachusetts is in crisis. The program he offers will cut trash costs by 44%. For the next 90 days there should be an intensive program to educate the public. Mr. Dancy noted that 140 communities have joined the program and have saved 2.2 billion collectively. New England is unique because of the small-town concept of management in contrast to county management. Construction of incinerators or landfills is highly unpopular and landfills are nearing the end of life. Trash is a utility and needs to be paid for as a utility. The current flat fee charged by the Town of Stoughton is inadequate and needs to change to a variable rate. Mr. Dancy concluded by explaining the program that offers 2 bags, either 33 gallons or 15 gallons. The pay-as-you-throw does not increase illegal dumping and current users are satisfied with the program.

Town Manager Calter commented that there will be an all-effort to educate the community. Any homeowner who prefers to opt out will be allowed to do so, provided the homeowner provide a contract to the Town proving they have a plan for trash removal.

Robert Moylan, former Worcester superintendent of DPW said the Waste Zero program had been launched in Worcester in 1992, for 200,000 residents, 50,000 households including 6 multi-family units. Worcester had what Stoughton has now, a crisis. Adoption of the program requires a change in residential habits, and “change is always difficult”. Worcester had the same objectives, cost, and illegal dumping. Worcester has been in the program for 30 years and has become a national model. Town Manager Calter questioned Mr. Moylan, the approximate savings for the Town of Worcester. Mr. Moylan responded 100 million over 22 years. A result from reduced tonnage, increased revenue and operational efficiencies.

Town Manager Calter added that the plan is for three months, the Town will educate the public via videos, visits to schools. After which, the Town will switch to enforcement and management. People who continue to practice illegal dumping will be monitored by the police department.

Ms. Missy Hollenback, working with DEP/EPA said the Town of Worcester is legendary. Her Town of Shrewsbury faced structural deficits as well. The introduction was difficult but once residents saw how efficient and cost-effective the program was, they were satisfied. The pay-as-you-throw program is not new. The process of educating the community leads to other benefits, such as repair and reuse, and increase in recycling. Recycling centers become local gathering centers for communities. There are many grants available, up to \$20,000 per household.

Town Manager Calter thanked Mr. Dancy, Mr. Moylan and Ms. Hollenback for their comments.

Select Board Comments

Vice Chair Cavey said it is important to protect the employees, noting that if this program meant lay-offs, he would not support. Town Manager Calter responded that there will be no lay-offs. Vice Chair Cavey asked if this was a first step toward privatization. Town Manager Calter responded “absolutely not”. Vice Chair Cavey continued that the Town needs to move away from subsidies, and the need to subsidize the enterprise funds with taxpayers’ dollars. The proposed program offers discounts to senior citizens. Vice Chair Cavey asked if trash and recyclables end up in the same container. Town Manager Calter responded that, after research, the decision had been made to terminate with the Brockton facility and to begin with the Avon facility, where the

sorting is done at the facility. Vice Chair Cavey asked also if there was evidence of reduced illegal dumping. Town Manager Calter responded that EPA, DEP, and Waste Zero have evidence that shows illegal dumping is reduced, mostly through educating the public, showing the public the tangible results of a more beautiful neighborhood, community pride and a quantifiable financial, environmental benefit. Vice Chair Cavey asked if there was any correlation with PFAS found in our ponds with what is thrown away. Town Manager Calter stated that any mishandling of any waste will have a negative impact on the water supply. Mr. Mokrisky, speaking remotely, said he wants to counter fears that employees will be laid off. He said the town will not privatize trash pick-up. He thanked the town manager and the staff that had done the research and had worked on the proposal. Mr. Mokrisky commented that a change is needed to protect the bond rating of the Town. To do nothing would jeopardize the construction of the fire station, the police station, and new schools. Mr. Gitto remarked that he had worked with the committee, commented on their diligence and stated that the current presentation is valid. Chair Roberts thanked the guests for their presentation and asked how the solid waste fees had been determined. Town Manager Calter responded via a phone survey with other Towns. Fees would be determined by weight. He added that “white goods” such as refrigerators, dishwashers, microwaves will be charged for pick-up and disposal. Mr. Carrara said he had spoken with a superintendent from another Town and this proposal makes sense. The number of trips will be reduced. Patricia Colburn, 53 Gilbert Drive resident, said that it was hard to sit in the meeting and absorb so much information and questioned the need to add costs to the taxpayer. Town Manager Calter responded that Moody’s doesn’t just review the enterprise funds. The problem is that Stoughton uses free cash to balance the budget. He pointed out that currently, residents disposing most of the rubbish are subsidized by those who dispose less. Trash pick-up should be charged per user, providing greater equity. Vice Chair Cavey commented that an increase in rates should be considered and noted there had been no rate increase since 2020. Mr. Mokrisky agreed. Mr. Gitto suggested that residents review the chart that explains “how did we get here.” Savings resulting from participation in the program will be directed to other major needs in the Town. Mr. John Anzivino, Finance Committee Vice Chair, commented that the issues raised are valid, but failure to raise the rates may result in a disaster for the Town. He asked about the contract with Avon and if this would impact on the 20-year contract with SEMASS. Town Manager Calter responded no, household trash will go to SEMASS. Mr. George Dolinsky, Chapman Road resident, precinct 2, commented on the failure to raise rates for 4 years. He asked if the retailer of the bags received a mark-up. Town Manager Calter responded that there was no mark-up. Mr. David Walsh, resident, suggested greater opportunity for residents to offer input. He asked the difference between the flat fee charge in the proposed variable rate increase. Bill Rowe, Town Accountant responded approximately 52%. Joseph Scardino, 303 Pine Street resident, commented that the success of the program will depend on accountability and enforcement. He expressed concern that the Police department, already taxed, will find enforcement difficult. Town Manager Calter said illegal dumping is a crime and is the responsibility of the police. He added that the Code Enforcement Officer will work to educate homeowners. Ms. Hollenback added that homeowners will have access to grant funds to install cameras to monitor illegal dumping. Robert Cohen, 134 Kotlik resident, said unfortunately the program doesn’t address assistance for homeowners who have placed their property in a realty trust. Kurt Stankowski, DPW Association, asked if the great trash system, now in place, would be changed. His association is against the proposal. Jim Gearan, resident, asked how the savings will occur. Mr. Dancy responded from recyclables revenue. Mr. David Lurie, 18 Robinette Road resident, commented that 20 years ago, the Town had recycling. He said he does not want to pay

100% of the trash pick-up costs. Town Manager Calter said the committee had originally wanted to charge \$3.00 per bag which was the break-even cost. But the committee decided to reduce the cost to \$2.00 per bag. Town Manager Calter said bags may be available at the Senior Center. Deborah Mann, 64 Simpson Street resident, said the cost of the bags will add \$200 annually to her trash pick-up costs. Peter Ventresco suggested a one-time charge of \$116 per household based on 6706 households which would eliminate the deficit. Christine Iacabucci asked if recyclable pick-ups would increase. Paul Giffune responded bi-weekly. Linda Curtin, 25 Merrill Street resident, suggested an incremental increase. She had used the program in Bridgewater and found it does not work. Town Manager Calter responded that every possible scenario was reviewed. Nathan Cleveland, 525 Plain Street resident, commented that the program seems good and asked that the employees be protected. Better management will lead people to do more with composting, noting that educating the public is key. Scott Carrara asked about the possibility of reducing the base rate. Lou. Gitto agreed. Town Manager Calter responded that the base rate could be reduced to \$240.00. Mr. Scardino, 303 Pine Street resident, suggested that the DPW make large bins available at the onset of the program as they do now in the collection of leaves. The bins could be offered as a free service to encourage preliminary clean-outs. Chair Roberts clarified that it was proposed to reduce the flat rate from \$254 annually to \$240. Robert Saba, Central Street resident, offered support for the employees of DPW. People will pay more to keep what we have. Town Manager Calter reminded the residents that the discussion was originally started on April 13 with a public hearing. The Town has continued to gather public input since. Cynthia Walsh, 1096 Park Street resident, said the police are very effective in tracking down those who dump illegally. She asked residents to just make the phone call. Mr. Cohen, Kotlik Street resident, asked that residents who have property in realty trusts be given consideration. Mr. Carrara said it shouldn't be a problem, if the homeowner is living in the home. Town Manager Calter said the committee would surely support an amendment to include single family owners with property in realty trusts. The proposed increases will not cover direct costs, but will offset them. The cost of the bags will cover the deficit. He reminded everyone that the program will not be implemented for 3 months, and there will be additional public meetings for public consumption and input. Chair Roberts noted, as a result of the open discussion, the Board decided to consider reducing the base rate. Chair Roberts asked if the Board wished to vote or continue the hearing. Scott Carrara said he wasn't ready to vote and suggested another meeting for public input. Louis Gitto expressed his readiness to vote. Vice Chair Cavey commented that public input is valuable. The Board had received an excellent presentation. Mr. Dolinsky, precinct 2, suggested re-drafting the current information, and sending the pamphlet to each household. Town Manager Calter pointed out that it would be very expensive.

Scott Carrara made the motion to continue the public hearing on Tuesday, June 27, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. Vice Chair Cavey seconded the motion. The motion passed 4 yes 1 no.

Town Manager Calter said the current pamphlets will be edited to include changes, and information will be placed on the Town website and SMAC. Chair Roberts suggested that residents view the videos available through SMAC for information.

Vice Chair Cavey made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Scott Carrara. The motion passed 5 yes 0 no. The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 p.m.

Documents Used During the Meeting

Select Board Open Session, June 15, 2023 7:00 PM

1. Item #3 Solid Waste Proposal - 9 pages

a. Waste Zero Presentation - 15 pages

Approved on:

07 / 25 / 2023

Signed by:

Debra C Roberts

Debra C. Roberts, Chair