

**Falmouth Recycling Committee and
Falmouth Parks and Public Works Department**

Date: January 29, 2010
To: Finance Committee
Nathan Poore, Town Manager
CC: Finance Department
From: Steve Hendry, Recycling Committee Chair
Jay Reynolds, Interim Parks and Public Works Director
Re: Solid Waste and Recycling/ Budget Items

During this year's budget process, a number of items have been identified for potential cuts and/or reduction in services. The survey (to the residents) has identified curbside recycling and the transfer station facility as potential cuts to the budget. Also, at the January 11, 2010 Town Council meeting, other solid waste/recycling areas were mentioned: The recycling containers (silver bullets) and also changing trash pickup from weekly to bi-weekly.

As part of the process, the Recycling Committee, with the help of Parks and Public Works staff, has prepared the enclosed information pertaining to these items. This is in an effort to provide supplemental data to be considered as part of the decision making process. As stated at the Town Council meeting on January 11, the survey is only a part of the decision making process. We hope that the enclosed information can also be a part of that process as well. Although this data may not make any of the decisions any easier, the Recycling Committee and Town Staff feel that providing this information to the Finance Committee is very important. Also enclosed within this information are alternative recommendations for the Finance Committee to consider. Thank you for including this information in the budget process.

Survey item: Transfer Station

Usage: In 2009, the transfer station was analyzed and reorganized in order to become more efficient. Part of that analysis included traffic counts, which showed that approximately 900 vehicles entered the facility each week. This equates to 47,000 visits per year.

Tag System: The reorganization also included a new tag-system. This system is generating new revenue. The price of the tags are ½ the price of Riverside Recycling in Portland. If the facility was to close and residents were sent to Portland, they would be paying twice the amount that they currently pay in Falmouth. An alternative recommendation the Recycling Committee has identified is raising the tag prices to the rate of Riverside/Portland and keep the Falmouth Transfer Station open. Based on fiscal year 2009 numbers, this would generate another \$40,000 worth of revenue and also maintain the service in Falmouth.

Environmental Impacts: It should be noted that, by closing the transfer station, it will be less convenient for residents to recycle certain environmentally non-friendly products. It is likely that hazardous products will be disposed of improperly. The transfer station handles mercury-containing products such as fluorescent lights, and household hazardous waste products such as anti-freeze, oil, et cetera. Although these products could be brought to Riverside-Portland, the convenience may not be as great.

Survey item: Curbside Recycling:

Usage: Curbside Recycling accounts for 35% of the overall recycling (700 tons annually). Recycling rates increased from 35% to 45% when curbside recycling was initiated in 2007. Elimination of the program will decrease the recycling rates and increase the amount of trash that is disposed of. Increased solid waste amounts would increase disposal costs for the Town. Disposal of trash costs \$88-per ton and recycling costs are \$0-per-ton. That said, the potential savings listed in the survey (\$150,000), could net a lesser amount. Historically, Falmouth has seen a 250-ton reduction each year in its' solid waste totals. This equates to \$22,000 each year.

Discussion item: Recycling containers (silver bullets)

Operations and Costs: Another change in operations due to the FY'09 budget was the hauling of the silver bullets by the Town. This change included the purchase of a truck and the elimination of \$45,000 annually from the solid waste budget. Silver bullets account for 65% of the overall recycling amounts.

Financially speaking, the elimination of this service could net a savings in fuel costs (\$4,000 annually) and with a one-time resale of the truck (\$95,000). However, the potential for increased solid waste disposal would add costs which are difficult to estimate.

Discussion item: Bi-weekly Trash Collection (and elimination of trash collection)

Operations and Costs: Town staff has contacted the hauling contractor and based on those conversations, a move to bi-weekly trash collection would actually increase the collection costs.

It should also be noted that the transfer station could not handle the volume of town-wide trash drop-off (if curbside trash collection was eliminated).

One item that the Recycling Committee discussed for consideration is increasing the cost of the yellow trash bags to offset the cost of the other recycling-related services. Research would be needed to insure that this is an allowable option. Currently, the revenue generated by the pay-per-bag program covers the costs to dispose of solid waste. The average cost-per-bag is \$1.77. The following chart shows potential revenue gains by adjusting the cost-per-bag:

Trash Bags Sold Per Year *	Revenue Potential With Price Increase	Cost Adjustment
230,000	\$4,600	2-cent increase (per bag)
	\$11,500	5-cent increase (per bag)
	\$23,000	10-cent increase (per bag)
	\$46,000	20-cent increase (per bag)
	\$69,000	30-cent increase (per bag)
	\$92,000	40-cent increase (per bag)

*estimated

Lastly, the Recycling Committee would also like to state the following points:

- Any cost savings to the town by closing the transfer station would be shifted to the residents who will be forced to pay higher prices to travel and dispose of material at Riverside. The cost shifting to residents also would apply to the curbside trash elimination scenario.
- The transfer station provides a place for residents to dispose of reusable items (bargain barn). Eliminating the transfer station would result in these items returning to the solid waste stream, i.e., increased solid waste tonnage/cost to the Town. This may not be factored into the cost savings projection.
- Eliminating curbside pickup of recyclables will make the program harder to restart in the future.
- Curbside elimination would be in direct opposition to the 'green' practices of the Town. Mass curbside collection reduces the amount of total automobile trips, fuel usage, carbon dioxide output, et cetera. This appears to be contrary to some of the Green Ribbon Commission's transportation and recycling related recommendations in their recent report.
- Falmouth has emerged as one of the leading recycling communities amongst the member communities, one that many look to for experience and guidance. It is possible to see a double digit drop in recycling rates as a result of eliminating the conveniences and making it a burden that some residents might not be willing to absorb.