

November 18, 2019

Town of Stratham Select Board  
10 Bunker Hill Avenue  
Stratham, NH 03885

**Re: Interim Report to the Select Board from Curbside Collection Advisory Committee**

Dear Select Board,

Please allow this letter to serve as an Interim Report to the Select Board.

The Curbside Collection Advisory Committee was established by the Stratham Select Board with the charge to serve as a conduit for collecting input into program details and rollout strategies for the proposed curbside collection program as well as to synthesize that input and advise the Board on implementation strategies and more generally the future of recycling in Stratham.

The group met five times in 2019; agendas and summaries of meetings are located on the Town's website. Over the course of this time, the Committee carried out the following activities in pursuit of its charge:

- Reviewed Town Meeting Minutes from March 2019 (pertaining to Article 14);
- Developed a list of questions and concerns raised concerning curbside Collection;
- Worked with staff on a description of the proposed automation program; and
- Met with the current trash vendor to discuss the industry trends, explore program detail options.

Following this work and discussions with Town staff, including the Town Administrator and Public Works Director, we have arrived at the following observations:

1. The disposal of trash and recycling in a municipal setting entails balancing a number of sometimes competing values and interests. For example:
  - a. Convenience to residents vs. operational efficiency
  - b. Environmental stewardship vs. costs to taxpayers
2. The automation program researched and presented to the Town meeting has garnered a variety of responses with many expressing concerns about significant program details and their impact to them and their individual circumstances (ex. size of bins, frequency of recycling pick-up, ability to move bins).
3. Discussions about resolving concerns about program details and potential adjustments are hampered by a lack of information about cost impacts associated with making changes to certain details.

4. Our culture as a whole is becoming more aware of the effects of human impacts on the environment including relying on landfills and consumer habits that generate the need for disposal and related costs. A broader conversation about how we manage and think of trash is warranted as part of this work.
5. It is clear that the switchover to a new system is an involved process and requires much outreach and communication. It has significant impacts on staff resources and is a significant adjustment for residents as well. In order to recommend moving forward we feel the benefits need to be more clearly articulated.

Based on these findings we want to submit these recommendations as an Interim step on our charge:

1. Hit “pause” on preparations for the proposed Automation Program in favor of obtaining more information about the benefits of the program, including financial.
2. Perform additional outreach to the Community to learn more about preferences and attitudes not just about Automation, but about preferences for Curbside Collection of Trash and Recycling in general.
3. Assess the community’s feedback from the survey and interest in other models for curbside collecting and disposing of waste, and - using that information - define the level of service desired by the Committee for the purposes of soliciting new competitive bids for the model and types of services desired.
4. Operating from the community feedback as well as from the new information resulting from the bid process, move forward with a new contract for the desired level of service defined through the process.

**Next steps:** We are prepared to work with the Town staff to progress on the survey approach described above in accordance with the following schedule: December and January - release survey to the public; February process survey results and report out to the Select Board with findings. We anticipate the Town would be prepared to release bids for requested services in the spring/summer.

We look forward to continuing on our charge in cooperation with you, the residents and the Town staff. We have begun the process of crafting survey questions that will help us with the stated recommendations above. We look forward to your feedback on this interim step and look forward to continuing on our charge going forward if that is the Board’s desire.

Sincerely,

Curbside Collection Advisory Committee

Tim Copeland  
Rachel Jefferson  
Karen Fuller  
Sophie Robinson

June Sawyer  
Ex-Officio David Moore, Town Administrator  
Ex-officio Nate Mears, Public Works Director

