

Curbside Collection Automation Project

Frequently Asked Questions March 5, 2019



The Select Board is preparing to introduce a new automated trash and recycling collection system later this year. This project is designed help manage costs for curbside collection of trash and recycling; in addition to financial benefits there are environmental and safety benefits. More information about the proposed collection system and frequently asked questions can be found below and is intended to be used as background information for the community.

Please share this frequently asked questions document, with anyone you think may be interested. This document will be hosted on the Town's website:
www.strathamnh.gov.

1. How does our system of collection work now?

The Town of Stratham contracts with Casella Waste Management for the collection of trash and recycling. Current collections days are on Thursday and Friday. If there is a holiday or weather interruption, the service days are moved to Friday and Saturday. Each service day, Casella provides two trucks to collect trash and two trucks to collect recycling. Each truck has a driver and laborer. Currently, both trash and recycling are collected each week. The average annual actual costs for collection and disposal costs for the past three years has been \$618,000.

2. What is changing and what is the Curbside Collection Automation project?

The automation project is the introduction of a new collection system, which will reduce costs of collection to the Town (by approximately \$65,000 to \$75,000, see number 9 below). In the new system, trash and recycling will be collected with one truck. Trash will be collected weekly and recycling will be collected every other week. Each truck only requires one driver to collect the material. Collections days will be Monday through Thursday (residents will have the same collection day for both trash and recycling).

The Town's current collection and disposal contract expires December 31, 2019. The new system will require new trash and recycling containers for each household, which will be compliant with an automated collection vehicle. A Warrant article for \$365,000 will be on the 2019 Warrant in order to fund the transition, to include acquiring containers for all households. The containers will be purchased from a third party vendor and their purchase in no way commits the Town to any one

collection vendor. At this time, the Town is planning to acquire 96 gallon containers for both trash and recycling (one per household).

3. Why make the change to automation now?

Cost savings associated with this transition are significant (see below) and result from efficiencies in collection (faster collection along with less labor required). The savings at this time is well-timed to help the Town manage overall costs in the municipal solid waste service delivery, including those associated with changes in recycling markets. In short, savings in collection costs will help the town respond to future increases in disposal costs, for recycling in particular.

4. What has occurred in the recycling market that has caused the cost to recycle increase?

In the spring of 2018, the Chinese government banned the receipt of mixed paper and instituted a contamination standard for all other fiber commodities of 0.5%. These policy changes impacted the global recycling market causing the market value of mixed paper to drop 90% and a 63% drop in the value of the traditional recycling stream. Adding to the stresses on recycling, the largest glass bottle manufacturer in the Northeast recently shut down their mill eliminating the only outlet for recycled glass in our market. Alternative outlets, which use glass in various construction applications as aggregate, have been found; this example is illustrative of the type of changes in the industry.

5. What are the other benefits to a change of this type?

Cost savings and insuring against costs and volatility in waste disposal are only two of the benefits to the Town, there are environmental, safety, aesthetic and other benefits.

- More efficient collection means fewer truck hours on Stratham roads, in addition, no trucks will be on the roads on Saturdays eliminating conflicts with other local traffic on our roads on the weekends.
- The new vehicle will be cleaner and more efficient and be run for less time decreasing reliance on fuel costs and associated carbon footprint.
- The new containers will keep trash and recycling contained more effectively and reduce trash recycling from being blown around.
- In addition, the containers, which will be uniform in color and form, will be able to be picked up and set down more consistently along roads, improving aesthetics.

6. *I live in a condominium, what if I don't have the space to accommodate a 96 gallon container?*

Currently, most all of the condominium associations in Town are served by curbside collection, similar to single family homes. The Town will work with each Homeowner Association or Condominium community to address concerns related to container size.

7. *If I need an extra cart, will the town provide one?*

The town is considering an option that would allow residents acquire another trash and recycling cart, likely for an additional annual fee. Additionally, as part of the new collection system implementation, the Town is planning to expand hours at the Transfer Station - year round on Saturdays and an additional day (Thursdays) during summer hours.

8. *If I have excess trash or recycling, what can I do with it?*

The Stratham Transfer Station is currently open from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday from April through November. The Transfer Station is open on the first and third Saturday of the month from December through March. The Town is planning to open the Transfer Station on Saturdays year round and an additional day (Thursdays) during summer hours.

9. *What is the savings to the Town?*

This program is intended to save costs, but also position the Town to absorb additional costs resulting from volatility in the fields of trash and recycling collection and disposal.

- The Town has projected a savings of approximately \$65,000 - \$75,000 each year in collection costs. This would mean between the 5th and 6th years, the Town will have recouped the initial costs of the 2019 Warrant Article (\$365,000) – the containers to be purchased will last many years longer than the payback period.
- Thanks to a grant from The Recycling Partnership in the amount of \$32,000 the Town will receive \$21,000 in grant funds to offset the total cost of the transition; the remainder of the grant has been awarded to invest in Recycling Education/Outreach and a coastal clean-up project/event.
- The fees associated with disposal of the municipal solid waste disposed at Turnkey Landfill in Rochester will continue as laid out in the current contract between the Lamprey Region Solid Waste Cooperative and Waste Management's Turnkey Landfill in Rochester, NH which extends to 2026.

- Disposal costs for recycling are set to increase in the coming years. The cost of processing recyclables is offset by commodity values. As commodity values fluctuate in the market, the cost of recycling will increase or decrease accordingly. Over the last 12-18 months commodity values have decreased significantly due to global market conditions. To maintain access to these weaker markets, product quality standards have increased requiring additional sorting. These two factors (low commodity value and higher processing cost) have increased the cost of recycling services.

10. What happens if we do nothing?

The existing contract with Casella expires December 31, 2019. Casella, and the industry in general, will be passing on the shared risk of the changes in recycling markets to generators (municipalities, etc.). With the structure of these contracts changing, working to minimize the costs we do control (costs of collection methods), which are not subject to market fluctuations (i.e. recycling markets) makes good sense.

11. Are we going to bid the new collection contract out?

The Town is evaluating the procurement strategy for this switchover. There are many factors and issues that will be considered. The current contract with Casella was awarded following a competitive request for proposals process in late 2016. The projected cost savings discussed above is in part based on the current vendor’s experience with our waste stream characteristics and familiarity with existing routes; which translates into high confidence in the ability to achieve the operational cost savings. Among the issues to be evaluated are the quality of service, responsiveness, familiarity with our community and service requirements which will greatly assist in managing the transition to a new system.

12. How do we contract for curbside collection of recycling and trash?

The town has a contract, which includes both curbside collection of trash and recycling with Casella. Up until recent years, the Town had a separate collection contract for recycling (with Bestway) and with Casella for trash. With the purchase of Bestway by Casella, the contract for both collection and disposal is with one vendor, Casella. While you still may see Bestway markings on vehicles, they are owned and operated by Casella.

13. How does our current disposal work?

The Town is part of the Lamprey Region Solid Waste Cooperative through whom it secures a bulk tipping fee rate with other member communities. Stratham reimburses the Lamprey Coop for the tonnage it disposes (for trash). Using the combined “buying power” of several NH communities, the Lamprey Coop secures a bulk rate with Waste Management, who owns the Turnkey Landfill facility in

Rochester, NH. For recycling, Casella disposes of our recycling tonnage (approx. 875 tons/year) at their Materials Recovery Facility in Charlestown, Massachusetts.

14. What other Towns in our County are using this system (and what population do they have)?

Casella's Salem, New Hampshire based hauling division (out of which Stratham is served) provides automated collection in Danville, NH (pop. 4,539), Atkinson, NH (pop. 6,901), Allenstown, NH (pop. 4,359), and Merrimac, MA (pop. 6,913). The company as a whole provides automated collection for several municipalities throughout New England. Casella is experienced in transitioning communities to the automation system. These videos may be helpful in demonstrating the automated system at work in other nearby locales.

Merrimac, Massachusetts Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvgV2UA5gMo>

Atkinson, New Hampshire Video (Part 1)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-50iJG_r9Y

Atkinson, New Hampshire Video (Part 2)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3jffj888M>

15. How can I help keep the Town's costs down for collection and disposal?

Households can also work to diminish their waste stream through a variety of efforts. This may include household composting (Compost bins are offered through the Conservation Commission) and general efforts to reduce waste. Every pound of waste diverted from the landfill translates directly into less money paid by the town in tipping fees.

"Recycle Better"

Casella has created a video which shows how and why we as a community should "Recycle Better". You can view the view here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdvboQQWUc8>

What's Recyclable?

As always, adherence to what is and what is not recycling will help improve waste stream quality and save costs. For more information, please see this flyer on Stratham's recycling program:

https://www.strathamnh.gov/sites/strathamnh/files/uploads/brochure-stratham-curbside_v03.pdf