

# Department of Public Works Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

## March 18, 2019

Commissioners Present: George Balco, Earl Littlefield, Christina Colarusso, and Larry Gomez

Attendees: Mary Ellen Larsen, Seth Gambino, Sophie Abrams Mazza, and Eunice Youmans

Department of Public Works Advisory Board Called to Order by George Balco at 4:05 pm

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes of January 28, 2019:**

George Balco: Motion to Approve? Earl Littlefield: Motion - Larry Gomez: 2nds - Unanimously Approved

### **Food Waste Composting:**

#### **Presentation by Eunice Youmans & Sophie Abrams Mazza (Island Grown Food Rescue)**

Eunice Youmans: We are with Island Grown. Sophie has been running our compost program for a couple of years now.

Sophie Abrams Mazza: We have been collecting food waste from restaurants and other establishments since 2016 on the island. Last year we got approved to run our own composting site at Island Grown's thimble farm. In 2018 we set up residential drop-offs at the Edgartown, West Tisbury, and Chilmark transfer stations so residents can bring their home food waste with the rest of their trash and recycling. People have been calling/emailing for this to be available in Tisbury, so we wanted to come and see if this would be a possibility in this town – it seems like it's something that residents have spoken favorably about and would like to have that service as well.

Eunice Youmans: When I spoke with Ray last week, it sounded like you had considered it but it looked like from your calculations that it would cost you \$900 and something. We have the numbers today – it's about a wash for Edgartown.

George Balco: Can you explain these numbers?

Sophie Abrams Mazza: That is the price for us to come to the transfer station pick up the food waste and bring back to the farm to compost it – it's a little bit of a confusing scale. It is based on our 32-gallon totes that we provide. To pick up one of those totes a month is \$80 and then as you add totes – it adds an additional \$30 per month. Totes are being picked up every week in the winter and usually twice a week in the summer – so the food waste isn't sitting around long.

George Balco: So, it's \$20 a week – so why do we want to spend that?

Sophie Abrams Mazza: In Edgartown, they charge \$2 per 5-gallon bucket of food waste, so they are making \$12 per tote – they do 2 a month. They are paying \$1300 a year and making about \$1100 back.

George Balco: So, 6.5 of the 5 gallons at \$2 which is only \$13 and it's costing me \$20 so I'm losing \$7.

Sophie Abrams Mazza: As you increase the totes the price goes down.

George Balco: But I'm losing money – where's my break even point? Seems like I'll be losing for a while.

Eunice Youmans: It costs you money to take that heavier organic material off island. \$93 per ton of waste to transport, ship, and dispose of off island.

George Balco: How much does a 32-gallon tote of waste usually weigh?

Sophie Abrams Mazza: 100 – 150lbs. The refuse district last year – we pickup up about 7000lbs of food waste throughout the year. It's not a heavily used program and we have someone working on the marketing for that.

George Balco: Working with this \$2 tote have you figured out the breakeven?

Sophie Abrams Mazza: Edgartown broke even last year without considering the saving from shipping off. It cost them \$168 for the year – so looks like the breakeven would be reached by adding a 3<sup>rd</sup> toter.

George Balco: What sort of rules and regulations do you have of what consists of compost material?

Sophie Abrams Mazza: Anything considered food – meat, bones, napkins, paper towels, coffee filters – residents don't have to do any type of sorting.

Earl Littlefield: No plastic.

Sophie Abrams Mazza: Right, no plastic no trash.

George Balco: It's certainly a situation where we must do a lot of number crunching for the breakeven point on this.

Christina Colarusso: Are restaurants in Vineyard Haven bringing their stuff to Edgartown?

Sophie Abrams Mazza: We directly collect from the restaurant – Copper Wok – it's mostly just residents that bring to the transfer station.

George Balco: What are you doing with the stuff you collect? What are you doing with the compost?

Sophie Abrams Mazza: We just started composting on our own site last year and we just had our first batch of compost screened on the farm last week. We are using ½ on our own fields to increase the organic content there and ½ will be sold in some form.

George Balco: Will you be competing with local farms to sell the compost?

Eunice Youmans: This is a pilot program, so we are still figuring it out – Island Grown does not want to be in the composting business. We don't want food waste to go into the landfill we want to replenish our soils. We partner with all sorts of farmers across the island to try innovative crops and different techniques – so it's not just "us" benefitting from the compost. We would like to show that it is a financially viable business so that an island wide municipal solution or private solution can come on line and put us out of business. We just don't want all this food waste going into the landfill being shipped off island – all the wastes & costs – when our soils here really need it – trying to close that gap

Sophie Abrams Mazza: We haven't figured out if we'll be selling it to residents, landscapers . . . .

George Balco: You don't do pig farms?

Sophie Abrams Mazza: We have partnered with some but what usually happens is people make those connections with restaurants themselves.

Eunice Youmans: We do have a black soldier fly system which will convert food waste to animal feed which we just received.

Larry Gomez: How many people are using the system?

Sophie Abrams Mazza: We don't have any way of knowing that but from the amount – 20-25 families in Edgartown?

Eunice Youmans: What are we processing now for food waste per year.

Sophie Abrams Mazza: We processed 160 tons of food waste last year – we have about 30 commercial customers and the 3 transfer stations.

Eunice Youmans: With this new in-vessel our capacity is 360 tons – so we hope to get to 360 tons by the end of this year. We also have relationships with farms and conservation areas across the island who have space where we can take the compost that has come out of the in-vessel to be cured.

Sophie Abrams Mazza: We are working with a marketing consultant team to increase the number of residential families using it. Current customer feed is positive - it's simple and they are happy to have that option.

George Balco: You only process food for compost? Animal waste?

Sophie Abrams Mazza: We don't have access animal waste now, but we do get yard waste from the refuse district and mix that with the food waste to get a good product.

Eunice Youmans: So that's the other side of this, we would also like to take your yard waste – it's ¼ food waste to ¾ carbon materials.

George Balco: We need a more complete financial analysis. For individuals to use the program it costs them more money. If I just stuck food waste into a 32-bucket barrel and called it trash it would be \$5.50 instead of \$12.00, why should I be paying to save the planet?

Eunice Youmans: This is still a pilot program and we are trying to learn from the process but I can imagine you then take your bucket to the compost facility and fill it up so there are revenue generating opportunities. We are hoping for an island wide solution. We don't want to be in this business – we just want to make sure it's happening.

Sophie Abrams Mazza: Another piece of this is working with you to get grants from the MASS DEP on the Recycling Dividends Program – Edgartown got \$4200 last year, less in the other towns (based on population). There's the Sustainable Material Recovery Programs Grants and the Recycling Dividends Program gets funds for the towns that can be used for several things – signage, collection fees, etc.

George Balco: Thanks for the presentation. Please follow up and send the material that we discussed and contact Ray to schedule another meeting with a broader body.

**LDO Changes: POSTPONED . . . Ray Tattersall needs to be present**

**Landbank Update:**

George Balco: Landbank Meeting – closed to public. Things that we asked for: lifeguards, parking, available septic, money for road maintenance – may allow us to use utility connections – which is up to the utility company, not Landbank. They talked about a small amount of money for the roads.

Larry Gomez: The small amount which is their portion for the two lots and have the town pay for the rest of it?

George Balco: Absolutely no progress there.

Mary Ellen Larsen: Did Henry Neider ever get appointed?

George Balco: The BOS deferred it to their next meeting.

Mary Ellen Larsen: It's time to go back to legislation. To sell your property you have to give them 2% - it's mission was to protect overdevelopment on the island.

George Balco: They already own 5% of the island.

Mary Ellen Larsen: They have done their job. I think that their way of preserving their property is just to restrict access.

Larry Gomez: They say they don't buy the in-town properties, but they buy these 2 and the town loses \$90,000 in taxes.

George Balco: Something to consider is to change that sales tax and giving to affordable housing.

Larry Gomez: That money should go right back to the taxpayer.

George Balco: Right now the Landbank is making \$14-15 million a year – that should be cut back. They need a few million for maintenance and a few to buy properties.

Larry Gomez: Then we should go to the legislature. Do you think Cyr and Fernandes would go for that?

Mary Ellen Larsen: I think they would support some modification of that.

George Balco: It's next to the town's only public beach – more property is going to add more people. They need to acquaint the police with the property and the problems that are going to arise in the summertime.

Larry Gomez: If there's a problem out there, people are going to call town hall.

George Balco: They basically closed the meeting and said we are going to work on our plan and that's it.

Christina Colarusso: They're not even going to put a lifeguard can down?

George Balco: They might, or they might put a line down. They didn't say they were going to ban swimming.

Mary Ellen Larsen: They would have to post "no lifeguard, swim at your own risk".

George Balco: If the lifeguard sees them they must go out and get them.

Christina Colarusso: It could also be a liability issue.

George Balco: They may put up some porta potties but don't want to maintain the septic systems.

**Schedule Next Meeting: April 22, 2019**

George Balco: Motion to Adjourn? Larry Gomez: Motion - Earl Littlefield: 2nds - Unanimously Approved

**Meeting Adjourned @ 4:40pm**