

Recycling Committee Annual Report 2009

In 2009 the Recycling Committee continued its mission to reduce waste by the Town by the most efficient means. We continue to track all materials that come into the Transfer Station/Recycling Center and to find places to divert as much material as possible from the waste stream (“trash”) by seeking out vendors who will find other uses for it. In order to determine the success of our program we calculate our recycling rate. In past years we have calculated the rate by defining recycled tonnage as simply (recycled paper + recycled commingled)/(trash +recycled paper + recycled commingled). Beginning in January 2009 we began to calculate our recycling rate in a second way because we were collecting and diverting so many other materials (such as books, clothing, scrap metal, and electronics). Our new formula is now (recycled paper + recycled commingled + all other diverted materials)/(trash + recycled paper + recycled commingled + all other diverted materials). In September 2009 we voted to track the recycling rate using only the expanded version because it gave a truer version of our activities.

We have also been following the fluctuating prices of recycled commodities in the open market since this affects the revenues received by the Town for various recycled materials. With the downturn in the economy, many materials were valued much less and revenues were down. A distressing result of this scenario has been that our contracted paper vendor has not honored its agreement to pay the Town the contracted “floor price” for the recycled paper it has picked up from the Recycling Center, and no revenues have been received for paper since March.

There were ongoing telephone problems at the Transfer Station/Recycling Center. Thanks to CM&D, a vermin-proof underground pipe for the telephone line was finally laid which seems to have solved the problem!

For several years the Committee has had a focus on programs and activities at the schools. An important part of teaching citizenship to students is to encourage them to participate in activities that benefit the community such as waste reduction, recycling and environmental improvement. We have been monitoring classroom recycling at the high school and we arranged for new recycling containers in the cafeteria courtesy of both Sherborn’s and Dover’s Recycling Committees. Also, one of our members was the advisor to the Environmental Club last year. At the middle school, we have also been monitoring recycling. Currently at Pine Hill however, the Committee lacks a liaison. We funded an Earth Day program last spring that was very well received. Late in the year, through the auspices of Selectman George Pucci, parent and School Committeeperson Ed Maguire began to attend our meetings. We hope he will continue to be our liaison and help figure out how to expand recycling so that it is a conscious choice throughout the school day.

Other activities the Committee has conducted this year include the ongoing “Welcome Bin” program for new residents in which we provide a new recycling bin filled with literature about our recycling program. We participated in the Library Fair with a table and answered questions about recycling and composting and sold bins. We had a very successful Clean Up Day at the Recycling Center where many members of the community and their children came to help. In June we recommended that the Board of Selectmen vote to support House Bill 3515, the Expanded Bottle Bill, to add bottled water, sports drinks, iced tea, juice drinks and other “new age” beverages to the current list of deposit containers, which they did. We forwarded that information to the Legislature. At the end of 2009 the Bill was still under consideration by the House Telecommunications and Energy Committee.

Our overwhelmingly successful Swap Shop appears to be literally bursting at the seams! Unfortunately we don't have enough room to keep all items protected from the elements and much of it sadly ends up in the trash. Also, having so many things scattered around makes the Recycling Center look like a mess. As CM&D prepares to move into its new garage, we are looking at the yellow metal "barn" at the Recycling Center where CM&D has for so long kept many of its out-of-season vehicles. We hope we will be able to take over this building and renovate it to make it weather-proof so that it will adequately house all of the Swap Shop donations.

In June we bid farewell to our longtime loyal member and Secretary, Karl Ludwig, who took on the duties of heading the Sherborn Boy Scouts and no longer had enough time for both jobs. We will miss him and thank him for his years of faithful service to us. We hope he will interest many Boy Scouts in recycling activities!

To encourage recycling at events or private parties in town, the Committee purchased a number of lightweight clear recycling barrels. We donated a number of them to various groups that are known to have frequent events involving townspeople and we have several left over that are available to loan to residents to collect bottles and cans at private parties. They have been borrowed quite a number of times and we will continue to remind people that they are available. Nancy Torigian, a parent of a football player borrowed one for the duration of the football season to collect bottles and cans at D-S games. Our hats are off to her!

In late October, Committee Chair Carol Rubenstein attended a conference on Zero Waste and came back with many new ideas about how to reduce waste significantly. Although it may sound impossible at first, zero waste is an attainable goal, if enough pressure is put in the right areas. There are cities in the U.S. that are approaching 80% already. Composting is a huge component, and Sherborn lags far behind in that area. Therefore, our next biggest push will be for much more composting. We hope to begin with food scraps at Pine Hill and food waste at home. If people do not want to keep compost piles, we will try to develop a plan for a drop off program for food waste.

We are very proud of our website, <http://recycling.sherbornma.org>. We thank Dianne Veitch for keeping it up to date. There were 650 hits this year. We hope residents continue to use it, or its successor at virtualtownhall.net as a source of information.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol S. Rubenstein, Chair