

## Transfer Facility News

**What is going on with the Transfer Facility? We are hearing that all types of changes are going taking place, but don't know what is happening.** This is a question that I hear frequently. I hope that this publication will help to answer it and any of a number of questions that been asked about our Transfer Facility and Recycling Center during the last few months, and, hopefully it will put to rest many of the rumors that have been circulating around Town.

Last year at the Town Meeting, the citizens of Belgrade approved a revised Solid Waste Ordinance. Shortly, thereafter the Board of Selectpersons formed an ad hoc "Solid Waste" committee to review the operation of the Transfer Facility and to recommend changes for improvements, including any changes to the fees schedule to reduce operational costs of the facility. This past September, the Board established a new Committee that joined Solid Waste Committee and the Recycling Committee into one new committee, the *Transfer Facility and Recycling Committee*. The new committee has the following members: Bruce GaLouche (Chairperson), Spike Carey, Ricky Damren, Ray Hammond, Mike Pooler, Jack Sutton, and Dennis Keschl (Town Manager). This Committee meets regularly on the second Tuesday of every month, with special meetings, as necessary, that are posted at the Town Office with notice provided to the newspaper. The committee is currently reviewing the work on new draft rules and fees for the Transfer Facility that were developed during the summer by the ad hoc Solid Waste Committee.

The reason for these changes is relatively simple...the Transfer Facility and Recycling Station represents one of the largest budget items in the municipal services that we provide. Surrounding towns are disposing of their solid wastes at costs that are significantly lower than we do. In fact, for the latest year that the State Planning Office has statewide information available, Belgrade has the high disposal costs/person (\$92.04) and the highest disposal costs/person (\$122.03) of any of the following towns: Fayette, Oakland, Readfield-Wayne, Rome, Sidney, Skowhegan, and Smithfield. While we are only the third largest producer per person of municipal solid waste (0.75 ton) The Selectpersons have asked these questions, "Why?" and "What can we do to lower our costs?" Their goal is, not only to improve the quality of the services that we deliver at the facility, but at the same or lower prices.

The newly formed Transfer Facility and Recycling Committee is putting together draft recommendations to improve our facility's operation, to reduce its costs, and to provide improved service to our residents.

Below are a few questions that are frequently asked by residents about what is happening with a response that reflects the "current" thinking of the committee.

***REMEMBER: The Transfer Facility and Recycling Committee welcomes your thoughts and inputs on these questions and invites you to attend all of their meetings.***

## **Just the FAQs! (Frequently Asked Questions)**

### **Q. Why does the Town charge fees to deposit certain items at the Transfer Facility?**

A. Solid waste disposal presently costs the Town about \$250,000 per year, with cost pressures rising. Fees will partially offset disposal costs for certain readily identifiable categories of waste and volumes and fees will promote recycling. The Board of Selectpersons sets fees, pursuant to our municipal Solid Waste and Recycling Ordinance, taking into account practices in other municipalities, impacts on Transfer Facility users and practical administration. They may be reconsidered and changed from time-to-time based on final disposal costs, operational experience and community feedback.

### **Q. Will Transfer Facility fees help reduce Belgrade taxes?**

A. Yes – revenue from such fees will be taken into account in setting the Town's tax mill rate each year, along with other sources of Town revenue. However, you should not expect to see substantial reductions in the mill rate because other cost contributors (school and county) overwhelm our municipal services costs.

### **Q. Does the Town “make money” on recycling?**

A. Not directly – but recycling reduces the Town's waste disposal costs by eliminating haulage and tipping costs for landfill or incineration disposal if these recycled materials. Recycling also contributes revenue from sales of paper, cardboard, plastics, ground wood and brush and metals. The Town must constantly improve its recycling procedures to accommodate changing markets, competitive opportunities, more efficient processing methods and greater public participation. Increasing revenues from our recycling efforts will provide for increased revenue further offset the operational costs of the facility. Beyond the “money” however, is the environmental benefit that our community receives from our recycling efforts.

### **Q. Why do I have to take certain items to Waterville for disposal? Why can't the Transfer Facility manage these disposal issues?**

A. During the past several years certain portions of the municipal solid waste stream have been found to cause significant environmental problems when landfilled. Consequently, alternatives to landfilling are required by the Department of Environmental Protection. Our facility is not yet able to effectively manage these waste streams (TVs, computers, monitors, laptops, etc.) Therefore, we have requested those who generate this waste streams to properly dispose of them. The Transfer Facility and Recycling Committee is currently considering alternatives that will provide a better solution for our residents.

**Q. Why has our “composting” pile been discontinued? I have nowhere to put my leaves and grass.**

- A. A number of factors have contributed to the discontinuance of the municipal “compost pile”. Most significantly is the lack of care that some people have taken with the compost pile. Attendants have found all kinds of material that in effect reduces the value of the compost generated or contribute to difficulty in maintaining the pile, e.g., plastic tarps, propane containers, and other types of municipal trash or garbage. Coupled with the fact that, in order to properly maintain the composting process, we need to provide for a concrete pad that will allow for improved mixing of the compost. We will not start the compost pile again until we can provide for improvements in our ability to monitor the types of wastes that are put into the pile, and improve our ability to maintain it. Consequently, grass and leaves are not longer accepted at the facility. We recommend that you compost the material on your own or together with a neighbor.

**Q. Why are the Transfer Facility attendants bearing the brunt of the impact of these proposed changes? I am hearing that they are suffering the majority of the consequences of the changes that the Committee is making.**

- A. The Committee has recommended few changes that have a direct impact on our Transfer Facility attendants. In fact, the Town Manager is responsible for ensuring the health and safety of the operation. As a result of the ongoing review, the NO SMOKING policy that had been a part of the operation since its beginning will be enforced. A DESIGNATED SMOKING AREA is being provided for both the public and staff to accommodate this policy. The Committee has also recommended improved facilities and condition for the staff’s break room.

**Q. Why is the Town contemplating a ban on scavenging by Transfer Facility attendants?**

- A. While it has been a long-standing practice to allow attendants to “scavenge” materials brought to the facility, this practice has, recently, come under a fair amount of scrutiny. Many citizens have questioned its appropriateness. Others would like to have an opportunity to take things that they can use. This is a difficult issue. Furthermore, our municipal personnel policy states, “Town employees must avoid any action or conduct which might result in or create the impression of using public employment for private gain, giving preferential treatment to any person, or organization or losing impartiality in the conduct of Town business.” Attendants are paid by the Town to operate the Transfer Facility in the *Town’s* best interests. Their jobs include promotion of recycling and optimizing Town revenue from the sale of recyclable materials and returnable containers deposited at the site, to help offset the burden of solid waste operations on Belgrade taxpayers.

The Committee also recognizes that “scavenging” of material from the waste stream may have beneficial impacts by removing items that have continued usefulness for others, while reducing the amount of material that we have to pay to have disposed. Therefore, it is looking at alternatives that will allow “scavenging” that has a

beneficial impact while reducing the impression that municipal employees are personally profiting at the expense of our residents.

**Q. May I give or sell discarded materials to Transfer Facility attendants off site?**

A. Yes. Exchanges between attendants and other persons that occur *outside* the facility gates and on attendants' off-duty time are viewed as private transactions.

**Q. Can I deposit stove, fireplace or wood boiler ashes at the Transfer Facility?**

A. Yes – but, ashes must always be considered “hot”. They can be deposited only at the location designated for hot ashes. They must never be put in the hopper or mixed with flammable material due to fire hazard. Everyone burning wood privately is cautioned not to burn plastics, pressure-treated, or painted wood. This is because such materials contaminate ash with substances hazardous to the environment and thus subject the Town to dramatically increased costs for the disposal of contaminated ash, if test show that the ash pile is contaminated. Furthermore, the State regulates the private burning of trash and penalties may apply for burning regulated materials.

**Q. Can I deposit wood and brush at the Transfer Facility?**

A. Yes – but, currently pressure-treated wood must be placed in the hopper. A contractor now grinds waste wood and brush for energy recovery. On-site burning has been discontinued. The Town's ground wood is tested for compliance with State regulations for maximum content of pressure-treated wood, plastics and metal. . Contamination of multiple lots beyond tight limits will cause ground wood from the Town to be rejected, dramatically increasing the Town's final disposal costs. Waste wood and brush piles are kept separate, as different disposal charges and credits apply. The diameter limit for waste wood is removed, but no stumps are allowed.