

February 7, 2014 Communications Committee Minutes

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COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

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Attending: Darla Hamlin, Katie Murphy, Rob Wood, Leo Maheu (ecoMaine environmental educator), guest

ecoMaine presentation on recycling education: Leo presented statistics from towns in ecoMaine. Towns that change from silver bullets to PAYT programs see an immediate increase in recycling. There is a slight downward trend for a while, then will crawl further down as people get used to what they are doing. The overall percentage of recycling for ecoMaine is 25.39%. There are things that can be done to increase recycling: (1) increase the cost of bags – we currently charge \$12.50 for 10 small or 5 large bags; Leo thought that Portland charges around \$2 per small bag. The largest bag supplier is Waste Zero. We could increase our price of bags and use this as an information tool – the increase provides a gateway for explanation. We would also need to show how this reduces taxes: Take the previous rate and tonnage before 2007 and show what it cost the town and compare it to the costs when our recycling rate was over 40% (high). Tell people that if their personal recycling rate goes up, they will save money on bags. Increase in bag cost is not an additional tax – it is a user fee. Rob stated that we don't really want to increase our prices, we would like to aim for a 10% increase in recycling through education. Point out that if people are putting out more bags, it is costing them more money. Leo pointed out that the only way for an IMMEDIATE change is to increase bag prices (even by \$.10 or \$.05). Education takes longer. The issue can be price awareness versus convenience (dump all trash in bags). Leo showed us some of the many educational materials that are available and talked about the program at Redbank. Some of the materials and ideas: (1) educate people at the source by attaching recycling list to bags, (2) refrigerator magnets with list of recyclables (ecoMaine has free magnets, cards, and stickers), (3) programs in schools are very effective – kids take home the concepts and expect adults to comply, (4) prepare a monthly column for The Forecaster for about 6 months. Discussion about bags: If an enclosure was made up to insert with the bags (people don't always look at these), would this be of benefit to other towns as well? ecoMaine would help if we wanted to do a program to survey recycling and trash etc in town – ecoMaine used an intern for the summer to collect information and talk to people. Schools: We could check into doing something in SAD 51 – the sweet spot is elementary through middle school. We would need a point person in the school for safety sake; we would also need a top-down buy-in from the district. ecoMaine has a packet for schools with general information – a multi-pronged approach is needed. Other towns: In Falmouth, Jeff Edelstein is trying to get all environmentally focused groups together as one focus group. There is a competition going on between the schools. ecoMaine: Frank Gallagher is the communications director. He is a former reporter, so he is focused on reporting and social media. His job is to do the sort of thing we are talking about, e.g., Forecaster and alternative media awareness. ecomaine.org website has been redesigned.

Other business

Minutes of previous meeting approved; they will be sent to Deb for posting. Veterans: We need to put up a page on the town website where veterans can register because we need to identify our veterans. Name, service, dates of service, etc. information. The Historical Society is lacking information on veterans.

NEXT MEETING: FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 7:30 AM

