**MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 27, 2025**

**MEETING OF THE TRANSFER STATION COMMITTEE**

The meeting commenced at 6 pm at the Town Library. Present were Nancy Strand, Chris Jensen, Barry Zitser, Paul Karpawich, and Andrea Bryant. Julie Seely joined within a few minutes. A member of the public, Casey MacDonald, attended.

There was no public input.

The previous draft of the proposed Annual Report of the Transfer Station Committee (Committee) for publication in the Town’s Annual Report was updated to note that although the Committee had recommended an addition of $30,000 to the Transfer Station Capital Reserve Fund for a March warrant for voter approval, the Select Board has determined to seek the same $40,000 annual addition as was approved by the voters in 2024. Chris noted that the figure he was given for the current amount in the Capital Reserve Fund was $285,282. There was a discussion as to whether this had fully considered the amounts that had been allocated from the Fund for engineering and cost estimates, to date. Nancy will check on this figure. The Committee then unanimously approved the Annual Report for publication with the proviso that if Nancy finds a different figure for the current amount in the Capital Reserve Fund, she could put this figure into the final Annual Report she will forward to Nicole.

On grants updates, Nancy reported that Mary Moritz, the Town Administrator, should be getting further information on our application for a Solid Waste for Infrastructure Recycling (SWIFR) grant in March. There was some discussion on whether the new federal Administration will attempt to freeze infrastructure and other grants. Barry mentioned that the $750,000 Congressional designated fund that Senator Shaheen had obtained for the Town’s future transfer station is uncertain at this time. Senator Shaheen noted that Congressional designated funds were not included in the continuing resolution that keep the federal government operating, but that she would continue to fight for such funds. Barry noted that we should make an inquiry as to whether we can now apply for a Northern Borders Regional Council (NBRC) grant, since it is now 2025, and we were told to wait until this year. Chris mentioned that the North Country Council (NCC) will be scheduling a meeting concerning NBRC grants and that he would contact NCC for further information. Barry noted, however, that much of NBRC funds come from the federal government, and that this might adversely impact future grants.

There was a discussion on the possible option of continuing some form of curbside pick-up. The Town’s transfer station consultant, Rusty Scott, had encouraged the Town not to preclude the possibility of some cost-efficient curbside pick-up. Chris stated that he had contacted Whiting’s Rubbish Removal and Wayn-O’s Disposal Services. Rubbish Removal was courteous and gave a ball park figure of $2,800 to $3,200 weekly for both solid waste and recycling pick-up. The extent, and terms and conditions of the recycling pick-up, would have to be determined. Wayn-O’s provides curbside pick-up for Lancaster, but did not indicate an interest in a Bethlehem pick-up. Nancy mentioned she was aware of a town, which has an opt-in provision for town pick-up. Private haulers might charge $16 to $30 per week for curbside pick-up for those who do not opt-in to a town program.

Mark Morgan is Kevin Roy’s replacement as manager of the NCES landfill, and he requested a meeting with Mary about the Town’s future after the closing of the landfill. Mary met with him, and Nancy read an email she forwarded to the Select Board. Mary responded to Mr. Morgan’s inquiry by noting that the Town’s current plan is to build and operate a new transfer station on Town-owned property off Route 116. Mr. Morgan inquired whether the Town might be interested in hiring the Casella organization to manage the existing NCES transfer station in lieu of the Town pursuing its own transfer station. Mary responded that our Committee had reached out to the Casella organization a few years ago on this possible option, but had ruled it out. Mary, however, did not rule out a further conversation on the potential costs and services that the Casella organizations might propose for continuing curbside pick-up and management of the NCES transfer station for the Town’s benefit, although she was doubtful that the cost and tax impact would be feasible. Nevertheless, she was open to exploring potential cost and service options at a future meeting, perhaps after the Town receives an update on its pending SWIFR application in March. She would want to have a member of the Committee with her at any future meeting.

Barry stated that the NCES transfer station lacks a lot of the equipment that would be necessary for compacting solid waste and source-separating and storing recyclables, and that the Casella organization considers the transfer station to be a company asset that would be subject to a rental fee. Julie noted that the periodic good-will brochures that the Casella organization mails to Town residents lists the Casella benefits of curbside collection alone at half-a-million dollars. Both Julie and Barry suggested that if Mary does have a further communication with Mr. Malone that she inquire whether there has been a revision in the likely closing date of the landfill. Julie has heard that the Casella organization may be trying to spread out the active life of the landfill into 2027 in order to insure a better continuation of service to existing customers while it makes plans for other landfill options. Barry noted that a number of surrounding towns were already transferring to the Mt. Carberry landfill so that this might possibly extend the life of the landfill, which must remain option through at least 2026. Any operation of the landfill beyond that date would also extend the host benefits provided to Bethlehem. Nevertheless, Barry believes that we should continue to assume that the NCES landfill will close at the end of 2026.

Julie noted that the Casella organization might also want to continue providing landfill services to some existing New Hampshire customers through use of its Vermont landfill at Coventry. However, there are some conditions for using the Coventry landfill, such as a town having an acceptable solid waste program.

There was a discussion about timing for the Town to seek bidding to see whether some form of curbside pick-up is a feasible option. It was determined that we should wait until at least March, when Mary will receive further information on the Town’s SWIFR application. In the meantime, Barry volunteered to work on a possible Request for Services in the event that the Town wants to go forward with bidding.

Barry noted that the plastics Resolution that he and Paul had submitted to the Conservation Commission, about urging the Select Board to commit the Town to pursuing voluntary reductions in the unnecessary use of plastics, would be resubmitted after the March elections. He is preparing a revised and much shorter Resolution. He noted that at last night’s meeting of the Transfer Station Committee, the Committee not only agreed with the timing, but also unanimously voted to be supportive of such Resolution if adopted by the Conservation Commission.

It was determined that a discussion on further Phase I cost reduction options be deferred to the next Committee meeting.

The December 16, 2024 Minutes drafted by Chris was unanimously approved.

For “other business”, Nancy notified the Committee that she had received this year’s free transfer station signs from New Hampshire the Beautiful.

The next meeting date for the Committee was scheduled to be Tuesday February 18, 2025 at 6 pm. (However, about 10 days after adjournment, the meeting date was rescheduled to February 25th at 6:30 pm.).

The meeting was adjourned at 7:07 pm.