

Co-op's Single Stream Plans Slowed By Lack Of Interest

By Chelsea Conaboy
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Not enough communities in New Hampshire have committed to a plan to build a \$15 million recycling facility in Concord in order to make it viable.

The regional cooperative that manages trash for Concord, Franklin, Laco-
nia, and 24 surrounding towns [including Andover] is considering building a single-stream facility on 40 acres it owns on Whitney Road.

Instead of taking a final vote on the project, members of the cooperative's joint board last night voted to change some aspects of the financing aimed at enticing more communities from outside the cooperative to commit to using the facility. But the changes ruffled the feathers of a few communities' representatives who said the cooperative towns would end up on the hook.

Single-stream technology allows users to put all recyclables into one bin that is sorted at the facility increasing convenience and often, recycling rates. The cooperative put forth the proposal in part because the cost of taking trash to the Wheelabrator incinerator is expected to jump from \$43 per ton to between \$55 and \$65.

The project needs at least 25,000 tons of recyclables – but preferably more than 30,000 – to make the economics work.

Proponents had hoped to be able to give the project the go-ahead this month in order to secure construction contracts for the 53,200 square-foot building, but they have just 18,662 tons of recyclables committed.

"We're not there. That's the bottom line," said cooperative President Jim Presher. "We're still working on it."

Fewer than half of the cooperative's communities have committed to the project. [Andover has committed – see the other article on this page.] But \$12 million in reserve funds that all of those communities paid originally with the intention of building a landfill in Canterbury will be used to pay for the project. An additional \$3.2 million would be bonded said Craig Musselman, president of CMA Engineers.

Originally, the plan Presher put forth called for repaying the money to the cooperative over 15 years.

Under the agreement approved last night, if the economy remains as it is today, no more than 50 percent of the debt service to the cooperative would be paid each year effectively slowing or stalling the replenishing of those funds.

Under the old proposal, it would cost towns \$30 per ton to deliver recyclables to the facility if the market doesn't improve. Under the new one, it would cost between \$10 and \$15 per ton.

"That's a heck of a big change," said Tom Mullens, who represents Webster, a town that has opted out of the facility.

He doubted whether that money would ever be repaid and said the new proposal would be the latest promise by the cooperative's management that wouldn't come true. He said nonparticipating cooperative towns had been promised they would not be liable if the project fails.

George Turcotte, operations supervisor for Franklin's municipal services department, said the cooperative should move forward with the project despite the poor economy.

He said someone will build a single-stream facility in the area.

"If we can get in (on the business), we're going to be the one to reap the benefits," he said.

In addition to the 13 cooperative communities that have committed to the facility, 10 others have pledged to bring their recyclables there including Bedford and Merrimack.

Steve Clough, Hopkinton's assistant public works superintendent, said he didn't like the idea of fewer than half of the cooperative joining up with other towns to use the cooperative's money "with us on the hook". Hopkinton has also chosen not to send its recyclables to the facility.

Presher said he is surprised by how hard it has been to get towns and cities to commit to the facility. He thinks that more communities will want to use the facility once it is built.

He said his office sent 85 more letters to communities asking for their participation last week.

"If we can put this project together in these economic times, it'll work," he said. "It's only going to get better."

Presher said he is talking with Casella Waste Systems about managing the facility. Musselman said officials are also talking with Casella about diverting to Concord some of the recyclables the company picks up in Maine and hauls to Massachusetts.

It was unclear last night when exactly the joint board would reconvene to take a final vote on the project. Presher said that would depend on securing 30,000 tons of commitment.

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Single Stream Recycling Could Save Andover Money

By Vicky Mishcon
Board of Selectmen

This issue of the *Beacon* features an informative article [on this page] from the *Concord Monitor* on the single stream recycling (SSR) facility which the Concord Regional Solid Waste Resource Recovery Cooperative ("the Co-op") plans to build in the near future. Andover is a member of the Co-op, so our recyclables would be trucked to the SSR facility in Penacook, and our non-recyclable waste would continue to be trucked to the incinerator, also in Penacook. Once SSR becomes a reality for us in Andover, residents can look forward to significantly increasing the rate and ease of recycling while lowering our waste disposal costs.

How would this change how we recycle in Andover? Instead of having to separate your recyclables, all recyclables would be deposited into a single container at the Transfer Station, much like the mixed paper container we currently use.

We would also be able to recycle more plastics with SSR. Currently, the Transfer Station only accepts #1 PETE plastic containers, such as soda and juice containers. With SSR we would be able to recycle plastics #1 through #7, which will include milk jugs and

detergent containers, yogurt cups, and plastic takeout boxes, to name a few. Please note the side bar which lists materials that are accepted in single stream facilities.

If SSR becomes a reality for Andover, changes at the Transfer Station would be minimal for the first year. Most likely, the mixed paper container would be replaced by a larger open container, where all recyclables would be placed.

Even if SSR does not happen, the town needs to find ways to increase recycling rates to reduce the cost of waste disposal, which will increase significantly in the next two years. The Recycle Committee, the Board of Selectmen, and the Transfer Station manager will be working together to determine how to proceed with the long-term plan for improving the Transfer Station. The goals are to:

- maximize recycling to lower the amount of waste sent to the incinerator and thereby lower our costs
- improve the traffic pattern to make the facility safer for residents and workers
- to improve the overall design of the facility to increase efficiency for the workers and ease of use for residents.

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