

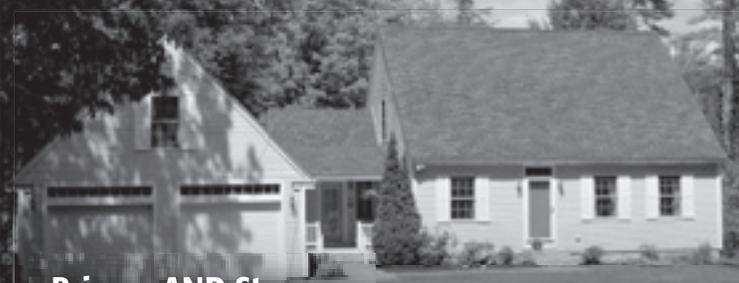


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The Swap Shop will be open on Saturday, July 11 from 8 AM to noon and welcomes (before noon) reusable items in working condition like toys, clothing, books, bicycles, and kitchenware. Please, **no** upholstered furniture, tires, windows, doors, electronics, or porcelain fixtures.

Selectmen Working on Plan to Optimize Recycling

SSR has cost much more than expected

Vicky Mishcon, Board of Selectmen

The simplicity of single-stream recycling (SSR) has had a positive effect on the number of people who recycle and how much material is recycled and diverted from the solid waste going into the hopper. Most people surveyed about the recycling program say they prefer the simplicity of single stream, placing all recyclables into one container.

However, figures from 2014 show that the Town has spent approximately \$9,900 on SSR. Tipping fees for SSR increased from \$25/ton to \$54/ton. If the Town were sorting recyclables it is estimated that we would have seen revenue of approximately \$1,800.

So why is recycling suddenly costing the Town money?

Over the last two decades, SSR was touted as being the latest answer to diverting more recyclables from the waste stream. New regional Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs) were being built to receive, sort, and market a wide range of recyclables, including all plastics, which most small Transfer Stations were previously unable to get out of their waste streams.

The success of SSR depends in large part on the efficiency of the MRFs. When most of these facilities were designed, 50% of the inbound material was newspaper. But in recent years, the EPA has shown an estimated 20% decline in total paper in the waste stream, while plastic waste generation has increased by 15%.

Manufacturers are seeking to make all their materials more lightweight. The new lightweight materials mean that a ton may now be as much as 10% to 15% larger in size than just five years ago.

This means materials spend more time on the sorting belt, more storage is required for lighter and larger units, and a larger volume of material is required to make a ton for the market. This also results in less shipping efficiency due to lighter bales.

Another big problem is the number of unacceptable items such as plastic grocery bags, diapers, and food waste that end up in the recycle stream. This contamination ends up increasing disposal costs and reduces end-market ma-

terial quality.

So many New Hampshire towns have jumped on board the SSR train in the past five years that the contamination issue has become a real problem for our regional MRFs. Contamination of baled commodities has resulted in stricter quality control on the export market to China, for example. A rejected load can be very expensive for the MRF.

In February 2015, the public indexes of recycled materials all reported losses in value: Cardboard is down 20%, newsprint 14%, plastic bottles 28%, and aluminum 2%. These drops in value are due to broad economic forces, including shipping strikes in California and a strong US dollar. North American markets for SSR materials was around \$95 to \$105 per ton for three years up until November 2014. Now it's down to \$80 per ton.

In Andover, we have to decide the best way to ride this wave of reduced marketability for our recyclables. It's difficult to predict what the commodities market will do over the next five to 10 years and how the MRFs' technology will improve to handle new materials.

We want to maintain flexibility in our ability to manage the waste stream. We have two compactors that can be used for trash or recyclables, and we have a lot of space to accommodate containers for materials collection.

Past selectwoman Sophie Viandier has provided an in-depth study of our Transfer Station, including an analysis of costs and revenues as well as recommendations for improvements in the facility and programs. Given the resources that we presently have at the Transfer Station, the information from Ms. Viandier's study, and monthly reports of our costs and revenues, your Board of Selectmen is currently working on a proposal to facilitate and optimize our recycling and waste management handling. We expect it to be ready for presentation to the town by the end of July and will be looking forward to your comments and suggestions then.

Most of the industry data for this article was taken from Negotiating the Single Stream by Michael Timpone, affiliate vice president for Resource Recycling Systems. The article appeared in the April 2015 issue of Resource Recycling Magazine.