

New London Waste Reduction Committee
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, October 26, 2023

Call to order: Chairman Jerry Coogan called the meeting to order at 10:08 AM

MEMBERS PRESENT: Liz Meller, Jerry Coogan, Gerry Gold, Maureen Prohl, Chris McKee, Joy Kubit

GUEST: George Parmenter, Brand Leader, Health and Sustainability, Hannaford Markets (Ahold Delhaize), Maine

OTHERS PRESENT: Bob Harrington, DPW Director; John Ellis, resident.

MEETING MINUTES: Minutes for meeting of September 28, 2023, unanimously approved.

New Business:

Hannaford Market food waste projects: George Parmenter, representing Hannaford Markets, owned by Netherlands company Ahold Delhaize, was invited to meet with the Committee and present that company's ideas on managing food distribution and minimizing wastage of both food and food packaging. Committee members were previously aware of Hannaford's collection and recycling project for "film plastic" into construction materials, a project in coordination with Rotary Clubs nationwide. The company worldwide is committed to sustainability by reducing food hunger and waste, reducing packaging waste, and educating consumers about "healthy choices" with a "Guiding Stars" awareness program for every product.

Managing food sustainability is, as of April 2023, part of the company's "Planet Hannaford" branding project: (SEE www.aholddelhaize.com/news/hannaford-supermarkets-introduces-planet-hannaford/). The New London Hannaford, for example, is now able to recycle 87.6% of food, cardboard, and plastics, thus avoiding landfills. Dated and excess food goes to food pantries and to farm compost.

Mr. Parmenter's Powerpoint presentation stated that: "In 2021, Hannaford became the first large-scale grocery retailer in its marketplace to achieve zero food waste-to-landfill by donating or diverting all food at risk of going to waste, while in 2022, Hannaford announced its commitment to have all stores be powered by renewable energy by 2024, making the retailer the first large-scale supermarket business to present such an ambitious timetable for this goal." Mr. Parmenter discussed Hannaford efforts working with food pantries; difficulties regarding "expiration dates" on food products that are in fact viable; difficulties related to expiration of federal government food and income support payments that reduced food insecurity during the Covid emergency but on recent expiration have increased food insecurity and made food recycling more difficult.

Bob Harrington, New London Director of Department of Public Works, suggested that Hannaford could benefit by collaborating with the Northeast Resource Recovery Association (NRRRA) of which the Town is an active member. (SEE www.nrrrarecycles.org/) Mr. Parmenter noted that Hannaford works with Eco-Maine with both recycling and its waste-to-energy (WTE) plant in Portland area. (SEE: www.ecomaine.org/about-ecomaine/our-history/).

PROJECTS:

Food waste composting project: Maureen reported that as of October 10th participants in Phase 2 of the Town's food compost project totaled 144 with 16 buckets still on hand. Tonage to that date is 10.5 tons to composting. Bob Harrington said the savings to date in tipping fees is \$609. One ongoing problem at the Transfer Station: Odors from fats in the food waste bins provided by Renewal Compost. The bins are emptied weekly, but odors attract bears. Maureen will ask Renewal Compost if anything can be done. There are 4 bins at the Transfer Station now. Three appear to be sufficient for current participants. But any expansion of the composting program will require more bins and more space.

Home-based composting: Committee members agreed that the September 29 Whipple Hall workshop on Backyard Composting had been successful. Presenters from Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC) were effective and the 20 participants were active with questions and comments. Four participants from Hilltop Condominium expressed appreciation for the workshop but in a later email reported that complexity of governance issues at Hilltop led to their decision not to pursue a formal composting project for Hilltop Condominiums. Sue Moseley Davies wrote: "we've concluded that a stand-alone composting program at Hilltop would require significant maintenance that we don't believe can be sufficiently managed by volunteers."

Polystyrene/Styrofoam® collection October 28th: Joy asked committee members to volunteer and assist her in handling polystyrene foam received from residents during the 2-hour morning collection process. Members speculated as to the amounts of foam expected.

Meeting with staff of Kearsarge Regional Elementary School, New London: Jerry Coogan said he had met with a teacher at the school but had received no further response. It was agreed that finding a teacher who cares about food recycling is crucial. And a presentation to the School District could be helpful.

Book Recycling: Bob Harrington reported that a non-profit Discover Books has agreed, at no cost to the Town, to provide a bin for collecting and recycling books at the Transfer Station. The bin could be installed by December. (SEE: <https://discoverbooks.com/>)

Selectmen Meeting and Warrant for Town Meeting: Jerry Coogan reminded members of a November 9th Selectman meeting at which the Committee will ask for a continuation of Town Warrant budget support at the same amount as this year.

A motion to adjourn was approved unanimously at 11:50AM.

NEXT MEETING DATE: Next Waste Reduction Committee meeting is scheduled for December 7 (12/7/23) Thursday at 10:00AM at Town Offices Syd Crook meeting room.

Respectfully submitted by Gerard Gold, for Town of New London