**Haddam Sustainability Committee Meeting**

**November 28, 2023, 6:30pm Old Town Hall**

**Attendance:** Kristin Battistoni, Sarah Neal, Joanne Nesti, John Nork, Mary Nork, Teresa Resnick, Gail Reynolds, Linda Talbott

**Call to Order:** Joanne Nesti called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm

**Pledge of Allegiance:** Was said by all.

**Motion to Accept the Agenda:** Motion made by Sarah Neal, seconded by Gail Reynolds and it passed.

**Motion to Accept the October 24, 2023 Minutes:** Motion made by Sarah Neal and seconded by Gail Reynold and it passed.

**Guest Speaker:** Joanne Nesti introduced Kellie Driscoll from TREX. Key Points:

* TREX takes soft plastic which is polyethylene film and uses it to make their TREX boards.
* That plastic is the type where if you put your thumb in it and it stretches or makes an indent it is OK for their use.
* They collect post-consumer: grocery store produce plastic, bread sleeves, etc and post commercial: pallet wrap and other stretch film. They have 42,000 grocery partners.
* Looking to expand grassroots partners: municipalities, universities, non-profits for plastic collection sites.
* TREX would purchase the soft plastic balers which are about 6-7 ft wide and 10-13 ft high
* Instead of rebating the town for the plastic, they would pay 14 cents/lb so about $140/bale. Each bale holds 750-1000 lbs. The balers have to be stored inside a building or covered somehow: no moisture. TREX comes with a 53’ semi-trailer but 50,020 lbs would have to have been collected first. Cost of each baler is $13,000- $15,000. This would be a 2 year contract with TREX

Mary Nork asked if the little plastic knob on ziplock baggies must be removed. No. Also no frozen fruit bags should go into the plastic collection. Those are not stretchable. Sarah Neal asked if small towns could join together? Kellie stated that counties and towns have joined together. There is no other town in CT at this time that has these balers. Mass. towns do. Joanne Nesti expressed the committee consensus that we do not have adequate space in the transfer station for a large structure to house several balers, nor is there enough staffing of volunteers and TS workers to manage this expanded program. Linda Talbott will discuss what we learned tonight with Chris Corsa. Teresa Resnick asked if the schools could possibly do this, also. A forklift has to be on site to lift the bales onto the TREX truck when they collect the balers. Kristin Battistoni said when she initiated this program, 1 TON of soft plastic was collected in the first 6 months!

**Food Scrap:** Linda Talbott reported October food scrap was 4,125lbs which brings our total to 89,205 lbs or 44.6 Ton. Fiscal year stats: 7/1/2022 to 6/30/2023: 49,475 LBS(24.74 T). She wants stats for year to year since the program started: 12/8/2021-11/30/2022: 42,280 lbs; 12/7/2022-11/23/2023: 51,675 lbs. This last stat is a week short so at the next meeting she will have the full stats.

Old Saybrook Estuary provides the food for the Senior Center lunches, and they are much better at estimating the amount of food needed for those who sign up. Since there is now much less food waste, Doreen Staskelunas, the Activity Director there, requested we only pick up on Tuesdays and Thursdays unless there is a special dinner on Mondays. Thank you to Joanne Nesti for all the Mondays she has collected the food scraps there and thanks to Helen Hastings who does Thursdays.

There has been no response from RSD 17 administration regarding initiating the food scrap program there. Linda feels they are focusing on the Master Plan right now and pun intended, this idea is small potatoes.

**TREX plastic collection:** Kristin Battistoni reported 115 lbs have been collected since the new cycle started November 1. Joanne Nesti stated we have Mary and John Nork, Dorothy Gillespie, Linda Talbott and Joanne as volunteers to collect the plastic from the TS each day the TS is open as the program has become more successful and the new bin is often very full. Sarah Neal volunteered to be added to the schedule. Mary reported she and John wear gloves and stand on a scale to weigh the plastic. Joanne has distributed rolls of large plastic bags to these volunteers to put loose pieces of plastic in. Linda has written an article that was published in the paper asking residents to please bag their plastic.

**Textiles:** Teresa Resnick has not been able to get info from RSD 17 or from Baystate regarding if the two bins at the schools are being filled or not and if so what amount of money the schools have earned. She will see if the school principals can do a promotion again. So far there is no sign from Chris Corsa for the textile bin at the TS or at the plastics bin. Linda will talk to him about that.

**New Business:**

**Treasurer Report:** Kristin Battistoni reported slow sales of the bags and starter kits. She will have a full report at the January meeting.

**New Projects for Next Year’s Budget:** Joanne Nesti wants better signage at the ball fields to encourage better recycling and promoting the increased empty bottle and can deposit which will increase from 5 cents to 10 cents. This means residents can return eligible cans and bottles for a dime in return. She hopes maybe the Boy and Girl Scouts will get more involved also. Mary Nork said there is a facility located at 373 East Main St in Middletown where bottles and cans can be brought, and they give you cash. It is called MT Bottle Return.

Linda Talbott would like to see if we could have a large sign made to be posted near the recycle bin at the transfer station which has the same information on it as the RecycleCT flyer which was sent out to Haddam residents. She will check with Chris Corsa about that and also ask about the two other signs he was going to have made: one for the soft plastic and one for the Baystate textile bin. Mary Nork reported that she used the Recycle flyer and took time to educate the seniors at the Senior Center about how and what to recycle and what not to recycle. The seniors asked appropriate questions and indicated they learned a lot.

Teresa Resnick would like to have committee members take a Saturday in the spring and be posted at key points around the TS to educate residents about the soft plastic, the textile bin, food scraps. She also would like to either have the TS employees or someone from the community use plywood to close off the top area of the wall that divides the Swap Shack from the stinky food bins. Linda will talk to Chris about these two ideas.

**Tee Shirt Project:** Teresa had the tee shirts and handed them out to those present. Linda Talbott will also deliver to those who ordered them and were not present. The extras will be stored at the Town Office Building. Brief discussion was held about charging $15 for them when we sell them at the Farmer’s Market next year.

**Welcome Basket Project:** Kristin reported she and Helen Hastings met with Jeff Sturges and the community calendar will not work. There has not been any business interest, nor has the Haddam Women’s Club responded. Two local churches seem to be the only ones interested in this project, so for now it is tabled.

**2024 Committee membership:** Kristin needs the names of those who wish to remain on the committee and any new members by December 11 so she can give them to the selectmen to reappoint or appoint. Those members present all indicated willingness to continue. Linda Talbott will reach out to members who did not attend this meeting and will get the list to Kristin.

**Covanta Trash to Energy Plant in Preston, CT field trip:** On November 17 Joanne Nesti, Gail Reynolds, Helen Hastings, Kristin Battistoni and Linda Talbott traveled to Preston for a tour of this plant which Haddam now uses for trash since MIRA closed. Gail Reynolds played a video of an animated version of how the Covanta plant works and also a video we took of the giant claw grabbing the trash and putting it into the hoppers for burning. The trash is combusted at 2000 deg F. The plant creates electricity during the process. Covanta has plants in the Northeast, Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, Michigan and a few on the west coast, but none in the middle of the country. They are 100% compliant with federal regulations and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 1 ton for every ton of trash they keep out of landfills. Go to Covanta.com to learn more about it. We did ask the employees who toured us if this plant had only 2 more years of active “life” left, which is what we were told by Tom Gaffey from MIRA. They indicated that is not true.

**Sustainable CT:** Gail Reynolds is the land conservation representative from Haddam to River COG (Council of Governments) which includes towns in Middlesex County plus Lyme and Old Lyme. She has participated in the Land Trust exchange (LTE) since 2009 which created a conservation plan for the lower Connecticut river, based on rankings of natural features. She suggested this information, as well as the Haddam Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), would be applicable under Action Plan 3 entitled “Well Stewarded Land and Natural Resources”.

**The December meeting is cancelled, and the January meeting will be a special meeting on January 16 at 6:30 pm. Joanne will check on the availability of the Old Town Hall on January 16.**

**Motion to adjourn** made by Sarah Neal, seconded by Gail. The meeting was adjourned at 8:20pm.

Respectfully submitted: Linda Talbott, Secretary