

Mar. 14, 2012

New Hamilton-Wenham trash program goes into effect

Hamilton-Wenham Chronicle

Gretel Clark and Alisa Grieco of Hamilton-Wenham Green and the Hamilton Recycling Committee talked trash Monday night, March 12.

The trash-talking pair took questions from an informal group of around 25 residents, mostly from Hamilton, about the new waste collection program in both towns.

The program is designed to save money by increasing recycling and reducing the communities' trash flow, which costs taxpayers money to dispose of.

The new program will change the way in which both towns dispose of trash and will include limits on trash disposal — one barrel per week in Wenham and on barrel every other week in Hamilton, new trash barrels designed for automated pickup to reduce labor costs and a curbside compost program with both countertop and curbside composting bins distributed in both towns.

Clark and Grieco will come to residents' homes and give advice on what is recyclable and compostable, or if residents have any questions about making the program work for them. Contact Clark at 978-468-7206 or Grieco via email at hamilton_compost@yahoo.com or wenham_compost@yahoo.com.

Information on what constitutes solid, organic and recyclable waste can be found on each town's website:

www.wenhamma.gov and www.hamiltonma.gov.

Below are some facts about the new trash program and some issues raised at the meeting.

Program facts:

- The waste collection program starts in both Hamilton and Wenham during the first week of April. In Wenham, that means pickup days are Monday or Tuesday, April 2 or 3; in Hamilton, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday, April 4, 5, or 6. Pickup days will likely be the same as always.

- In both towns, every week, recyclable and compostable waste will be collected.

- Recyclable waste is now "single-stream," meaning residents no longer have to have paper in one container and plastics, bottles and cans in other containers.

- Solid waste, meaning everything that can't be recycled or composted, will be picked up every week in Wenham and every other week in Hamilton. Each household gets one "free" barrel of solid waste picked up.

- Solid waste in excess of the capacity of the barrel must be placed in a town trash bag available locally at Crosby's or Dawson's Hardware. These bags will be available in two sizes for \$1.75 in Hamilton and \$2 in Wenham and \$1, blue for Hamilton and green for Wenham.

- In Hamilton, on the "off" week, residents may put out excess solid waste, only if it is in one of the two sizes of Hamilton trash bags, available locally at Crosby's or Dawson's Hardware.

New bins for compostable waste are being delivered this week. This delivery includes a 13-gallon green container with wheels to bring curbside and a beige countertop bin with a handle for indoor or countertop use. Those who have been participating in the pilot curbside composting program will not receive new bins because they already have them.

- A 35-gallon trash barrel for solid waste will be delivered during the week of March 19. This barrel is specific for the automated trash pickup provided by Hiltz. The cost to the town is less because fewer Hiltz personnel are necessary for picking up the barrels.

Information on the waste reduction program is contained in the delivered barrels.

- Old trash barrels can be used as single-stream recycling containers by adding a "recycling" sticker obtainable from either Town Hall.

- Residents may use any container they like for recycled waste. Labeling the containers will help.

- Each town is setting a day to collect unwanted trash barrels that have been replaced by the required one for automated trash pickup. More information on this is coming later. Hamilton's day may be June 16.

- Residents can still put out one bulk item per week and town regulations for collection of electronic waste and hazardous waste still apply.

What can residents put out curbside?

- Compostable waste includes vegetable peelings, meat and bones, table scraps, dairy products, "dirty" compostable paper (paper towels, pizza boxes, tissues, napkins, plates, cardboard, newspaper, paper cups and bags), used kitty litter.

- Recycled waste includes clean paper (newspaper, magazines, cardboard), milk and juice jugs and cartons, egg cartons, cans, bottles, plastics (including rinsed plastic plates and tableware, plastic cups, plastic "doggie" bags), coffee grounds, eggshells, loose tea and tea bags. For a complete list, see the information posted on each town's website.

- Solid waste includes Styrofoam products, plastic wrap, and polypropylene bags and packaging, alkaline batteries, and light bulbs.

What can residents recycle elsewhere?

- Polyethylene bags, the bags y from the grocery store, can be recycled at grocery stores. Shaw's, Crosby's and Stop and Shop all have containers for recycling polyethylene bags.

- The towns' online information contains a list of places that recycle different types of batteries.

- The towns' online information contains a list of places that recycle various kinds of Styrofoam products.

- Staples recycles empty printer ink cartridges.

Issues raised with the program

These are the concerns people raised at the March 12 meeting:

- Sorting trash is inconvenient. Answer: People are there to help.
- Trash pickup every other week is not enough (Hamilton only). Answer: Use a town bag for trash pickup on the off week.
- Who decided that Hamilton should have solid waste pickup every other week? Why wasn't there a Town Meeting vote? Answer: Selectmen made the decision, according to state legislation.
- Bones and meat and kitty litter in the compost will make it unhealthy to use for vegetables. Answer: The compost is tested by the state to ensure that it stays safe. The high compost temperature kills bacteria.
- Using town bags costs too much. Answer: This waste-reduction program saves the town money even if residents don't see it directly in their wallets. Moreover, it is one of the only ways available to reduce costs. How much it costs personally depends on how much someone chooses to recycle and compost. Some other towns don't allow any "free" barrels; other towns don't have trash pickup at all — residents have to drive it to a transfer station on their time and pay by weight. Eventually, the state is going to require recycling and composting, so Hamilton and Wenham are ahead of the game.

Nov. 16, 2012

Christ Church celebrates centennial

Hamilton-Wenham Chronicle

Christ Church of Hamilton and Wenham, which has a rich history of ministry and worship, celebrated its 100th anniversary this past weekend.

"The 100th anniversary is certainly a good marker to celebrate the past, as well as look toward the future," said Rev. Patrick Gray of the landmark occasion.

Robin Davis, head of the Communications Committee for the church, said though the church started in 1912, the chapel wasn't built until 1926.

"It's a beautiful English-style chapel with stained-glass windows," she said.

Following the baby boom, a more modern church was built, so there are currently two church buildings on the property.

The anniversary was commemorated with two days of festivities at the church.

On Saturday, tours of the property were given and a Once-in-a-Century Great iPhone scavenger hunt was held.

Davis said those participating in the hunt were asked to do a myriad of different things.

For instance, hunters were asked to find the picture of a generous female donor and answer the question of how many years she lived by taking a video of everyone in the group clapping the number of years.

Another quest asked scavenger hunters to take a photo of themselves posed around the well as the cherubs were posed.

Hunters were also tasked to go to the Memorial Garden where St. Francis' ashes are buried; the person in the group closest to St. Francis' height had to pose in the robe and recite St. Francis' prayer while being video-taped.

Following those two events, a reflective panel discussion was held in the big church.

"Three groups of people represented eras of the history of the church," Davis said. "Each group had 10-15 minutes to talk about their era."

Members of those groups included Mary Crowell, Lea Parson, Dick Phippen, Bo Preston, David Bergquist, Nancy Mering, Bruce Ramsey, Jamie Breed, Bill Cross and Kerlin Eardley.

Gray said that, though the discussion was not necessarily a factual history of the church, people who were there at the time were able to reminisce and share their memories.

Bergquist said he and his family have had very fond memories of the church since his daughter was baptized there in 1975.

"One thing that's unique about Christ Church is that it's become much more evangelical ... and liturgically rich," he said. "And we've been beneficiaries of it for 37 years."

Bergquist said Christ Church is also a very caring parish.

"My wife is in the hospital as we speak," he said, adding that he has received calls and food from members of their prayer group while she undergoes knee replacement surgery. "It's a very supportive parish."

Parishioners have also put together a pictorial video history of Christ Church, which will be put up on the church's website.

Gray said the video will also serve as the basis for an image book, which should be completed within the next few months.

Saturday's events were capped with a reception dinner.

Davis also said people who were married, baptized, attended Sunday School, taught Sunday School or served as members of the clergy at the church were recognized during the festivities.

Sunday included preaching by guest bishop Mark Dyer, who was the rector of Christ Church in the early 1980s.

"He was very much loved, as were many of the other rectors," Davis said.

Dyer preached at all three services, as well as the special adult education program.

Gray said that he had never met Dyer, so that was something he had been looking forward to during the centennial festivities.

Dec. 21, 2012

Black Cow gets a makeover

Hamilton-Wenham Chronicle

After seven months undergoing major renovations, the Black Cow Tap & Grill in Hamilton reopened its doors late last month, welcoming customers back with an entirely new layout, revamped menu and an expanded beer and wine selection.

They're just in awe of the physical layout," said general manager Nicole Ananian.

Before the renovations, the restaurant was split in two sections, a dining room and a bar and lounge area.

It's nice that it's so open now," Ananian said. "It's like a community in itself."

The restaurant closed in April and the renovations began shortly thereafter.

"It was a spontaneous decision," owner Joe Leone said, explaining that he had been planning renovations for years. "I decided to finally just do it."

Leone said he had developed a plan with local architect Doug Trees five years ago.

He designed both Black Cows," Leone said. "So I gave him the old plans we had from five years ago and asked him to improve upon them."

Some of the changes that took place included relocation of the main entrance to the side of the building, redesigning the interior to allow for a more open floor plan, the addition of a large fire pit, as well as enhancing the state-of-the-art kitchen.

"I told Doug I wanted a modern industrial feel and he did it," Leone said, pointing out the different metals that have been incorporated into the design.

Leone said his wife, Erika, was very instrumental in the redesign process.

"It took longer than expected," Leone said. "But we wanted to wait until we were ready."

Holding a quiet and unannounced reopening on Nov. 25, Leone said he's been pleased with the reactions from new and former customers.

"It's been very well-received," he said. "We're working hard to keep up with the great feedback."

Though the seating capacity for the restaurant remains at 100, Leone said the overall atmosphere has been improved.

"We've made some acoustical changes," he said, explaining that sound boards have been strategically placed around the dining room. "You can sit across from someone and you can actually hear them."

The dining room also has brand new hickory flooring and all new mahogany tables and chairs.

The bar is brand new and portions of the old bar top have been repurposed as benches along the sides of the dining room.

As for the beer and wine selection, Ananian said both have been improved and expanded.

Before the renovations, the Black Cow had 24 beers on tap; that number has expanded to 33.

"We have local beers and seasonal brews that we can switch out," she said.

The wine list has expanded to 100 varieties, including brands from California, Italy and France.

"We have something that will hit every palate," Ananian said.

When it came time to updating the dinner and lunch menus, Ananian said it was very much a collaborative effort.

"It was a group decision to keep some of the favorites," she said. "But we also wanted to offer more appetizers and include healthy options."

Pointing out that customers can order anything from a burger and nachos to filet mignon and lobster ravioli, Ananian said the restaurant has something for everyone's taste.

"We try to have a little bit for everybody," said executive chef Al Quiroz. "We do the best we can to make the best food possible."

With all of the changes, Leone said he is really pleased with how things are going.

"We've already had a lot of repeat business," he said. "We've only been open for a couple of weeks, but we're already seeing customers coming back."

Leone said he has enjoyed being part of Hamilton's business community the past 18 years and has high hopes for the future.

"15 Walnut is a great restaurant," he said. "I'd like to think we can coexist and make Hamilton a dining destination," he said.

The Black Cow is open Monday through Friday, from 4 p.m. to closing and Saturdays and Sundays from noon to closing.

Dec. 20, 2012

Future of ECO is at a 'crossroads'

Hamilton-Wenham Chronicle

The Hamilton Board of Selectmen, at its meeting Monday, Dec. 17, discussed the future of its Emergency Center Operations.

"We're at kind of a crossroads," Town Manager Michael Lombardo said. "Negotiations with our neighboring towns have essentially kind of bogged down. Both jurisdictions that we were working with, Manchester and Ipswich, have resolved to stay put for the time-being and continue to provide their own service."

Lombardo said, given the current budget situation, the town will need to make a decision about the future of its services.

“Our general sense is that, presuming that we are going to continue operations on our own, would be somewhat short-sighted on our part,” he told the Selectmen. “We felt it warranted a discussion with you all to get some direction in terms of where do we go from here ... We are either faced with having to fund our own operations to keep the services in Hamilton.”

Lombardo said, at present, there are very few other options available to the town.

“One is Essex County,” he said, explaining that a meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 18, with one of the people on the steering committee to get additional information about the regional emergency communications center.

Lombardo reminded the Selectmen that they had quite a few concerns and questions about some of the operational components to joining the regional dispatch.

“We’re hoping our questions will be answered,” he said.

Selectmen Jeff Stinson and David Neill said they both had conversations with Selectmen from Ipswich regarding the possibility of combining their dispatch centers.

“They were open to the concept of having Hamilton come there,” Neill said.

In any event, Neill said he got the feeling that Ipswich officials wanted to wait a while before making any commitments.

“They made up their mind that they are going to wait and see what develops with the Essex County regional system and make their decision at a later date,” Lombardo explained. “If we wanted to close up shop and move up to Ipswich, that’s something that they’d be willing to discuss now, but, I emphasize, they do not have the building or the technology to accommodate us.”

Lombardo said Manchester has also decided to continue operations internally.

“Perhaps, a year or two or three from now, if the experience is not positive with going it alone, they’d still consider it,” he said. “They’re not against it, but it is at least a year or two in the offing at a minimum.”

Lombardo said Hamilton will now have to decide whether to take the same approach as its neighboring communities or give serious thought to joining the Essex County regional system.

Lombardo said that, if Hamilton were to merge with Manchester, they would be looking at the same number of full-time employees on payroll.

“We don’t staff in any peculiar way that drives up our cost,” he said.

However, when Wenham leaves the ECO to join the regional dispatch center, the town of Hamilton will need to maintain staffing, as opposed to sharing the costs.

“With Wenham leaving, we aren’t able to give up coverage,” he said. “That’s where we’re in a bit of a pickle is because those costs would have to be absorbed.”

According to the analysis, maintaining its own dispatch will cost the Town of Hamilton an additional \$161,000 in FY14.

Another matter that Lombardo said the town will continue to explore is bringing Hamilton dispatchers on board if they were to join the regional dispatch.

“They haven’t started the recruitment,” he said. “We have some of the highest trained and best dispatchers in the area and so I think there will be room for some, but I can’t guarantee all ... We have a workforce to be concerned about and we’re going to work hard to try to get them jobs if we go that direction.”

Selectman Jennifer Scuteri inquired as to how long it would take to get on board if the Selectmen decided to join the Essex County regional dispatch.

Lombardo said, if that would be the pleasure of the board, the decision would need to be made within the next six weeks so that they may begin working on the transition.

Hamilton Police Chief Russell Stevens said it would be in the board’s best interest to make its decision sooner rather than later.

“If you want to join, you’re better off saying yes now and getting in on the ground floor while they’re still forming the policies and procedures,” he said. “If you want to be a part of it, do it now.”