Public Works Commission Meeting of 6/16/2021

Questions and comments for DPW re: PWC’s Consolidated Collection agenda item 6:

From Solveig Overby

My comments and questions are provided here to be posted as part of the meeting documents. The Commissioners asked me to stop asking questions since it was taking too long.

I support item number 1 of the proposed resolution before the PWC tonight, to advance implementation of a fully consolidated collection system for residential properties of 1 to 4 units. Clearly, having fewer trash trucks driving around Burlington streets because they are following efficient routes, will save fuel, reduce truck miles traveled, and reduce the pollution and noise generated by those trucks. These are good things.

Item 3 of the current proposal, should be done first: this is the resident engagement process to determine specific service levels and options to be initially offered. The proposals presented in the Feb. 3, 2020 GBB report and subsequent 2021 efforts to expand information to cover the municipal options, have not realistically assessed what Burlington residents want. Its savings presume what is confusingly labeled “EOW” trash service, meaning “every other week.” It glaringly avoids planning for replacement of the Pine St. drop off center so Burlington can capture revenue from the 15 to 25% of residents who choose to drop off their trash.

I do not support item 2, which proposes what’s being called a “hybrid” consolidated collection model where the City continues to collect recycling and franchised private haulers collect the trash and organics in geographic zones for which they will bid to provide service. I have read through as many of the materials as I can and reviewed the presentations made at public meetings. The information available makes clear to me that the municipal option is the best long-term option for Burlington. But the information presented is not sufficiently coherent to support a data-driven evaluation of the City’s choice between investing in a municipal system and implementing the proposed “hybrid” plan.

Despite the fact that more effort will be required by the City to get it started, the finances of the municipal model make sense. The municipal system is the best way to control costs, keep service affordable, effectively maintain control over quality of service and facilitate the reduction of refuse generated in Burlington. Under a municipal model, private haulers will still serve the larger residential buildings and commercial properties. Small haulers will continue to contract to serve to these buildings as well.

Municipalities are legally responsible for managing the solid waste of their residents, whether it’s trash, recycling or organics. According to the data in our materials 40% of municipalities in the US have municipally controlled consolidated collections systems. We are successful at operating BED and our water, wastewater and stormwater systems so I’m confident we can be successful at this necessary municipal service too.
Despite the work put in by DPW staff, the materials we have before us so tonight do not provide a complete representation of the advantages of a municipal system. I appreciate the effort made and recognize the intent to be objective by providing the included “benefits and risks” analysis chart. But combining two factors with different meanings into one rating value (eg. “high benefit”/”low risk”) obfuscates the meaning of the rating value. How would one rate something that’s high benefit but also high risk?

The memo we have states: “GBB reported that Burlington residents could save somewhere between $1.6M and $3.6M by implementing a weekly consolidated collection model compared to a residents having a weekly subscription model. “

Q. Can you explain how those savings would be realized by Burlington residents?

In the June 28, 2020 memo from DPW to the City Council’s Transportation, Energy and Utilities Committee (TEUC), concern was expressed by DPW that these savings were based on “EOW” pickup for trash and recycling. I discovered that “EOW” means “every other week.”

Q. Are the rates in the cost estimates comparison chart costs for service every other week for pickup of trash, or weekly or something else?

The 2020 GBB study, collected much useful data but it is unfortunately inadequate for failing to evaluate the municipal option at the same time as it evaluated the franchise option.

Q. Why was the municipal option not part of the 2020 GBB study?

Because no distinction was made in the 2020 GBB study between municipal vs franchise models in the surveys commingled questions about consolidated collection with questions about franchising in a way that would lead residents to think consolidated collection IS franchised trash collection. The term “city-wide collection system” was used which is also ambiguous and could be misunderstood to mean municipal system.

Page 4 of the memo for tonight’s 6/16/2021 PWC meeting has a chart representing the monthly and annual costs under different models:

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<th>Options</th>
<th>Municipal Model</th>
<th>Municipal Model</th>
<th>Municipal Model</th>
<th>Franchise Model</th>
<th>Franchise Model</th>
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<tr>
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<td>339 Pine St 15%</td>
<td>339 Pine St 25%</td>
<td>Opt Out</td>
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<td>15%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Opt Out</td>
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### Resident Annual Cost

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### Resident Monthly Cost

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<th>$35.25</th>
<th>$38.80</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Below the chart of comparable costs on Page 4 of the memo for PWC 6/16/2021 meeting:

“Additionally, GBB’s Franchise model estimate does not include additional City costs for overseeing the performance of the private haulers or replacing the overhead currently contributed by the Recycling Program’s Solid Waste Generation Tax for the pro-rata share of the General Fund’s administrative expenses. The City estimates that these costs, if recouped from the franchised haulers through the Solid Waste Generation Tax or other some financial mechanism, would add an estimated $0.66 to $4.24/month to the franchise model per residential dwelling unit depending on the assumed costs to be recouped. Factoring in these costs, the financial differential been the two models narrows.”

On page 3 of the memo, it says:

Regarding the solid waste generation tax rate your projections are that this would be approximately $2.00/month increase per residential dwelling.”

Q. Is the $2/month increase included in the extra $.66 to $4.24 per month cost for the franchise model or in addition? Why are these extra costs not added in on the chart of comparable monthly and annual costs between the municipal and franchise models?

Q. Can you clarify how these these additional monthly costs impact the costs for residents under the proposed hybrid franchise model?

I understand 0% “opt-out” on the chart means the consolidated collection would be mandatory for all Burlington residences of 1-4 units spreading the cost among 13,000 some residences. DPW has noted 25% opt-out is closer to current practice. 15 to 25% of residents now opt to bring their trash to a drop off center like the currently closed CSWD-managed Pine St. location or CSWD-managed South Burlington Patchen Road location.

Q. Can you explain how the “opt-out” percentage limit might work?

[For example, under the 15% opt-out, if more than 15% of residents want to do self-hauling and use a drop off center, I think Director Spencer said at the April PWC meeting that there would need to be some sort of lottery to decide who would be allowed to do self-drop off and avoid participating in the consolidated collection system. A municipal system would allow Burlington to flexibly manage how it handle self-drop off of trash, recycling and organics.]
Q. Would it make sense for Burlington to include in the consolidated collection plan a way to maximize capturing the “opt-out” pay-as-you-drop revenue for Burlington?

Q. Why has a Burlington-owned and managed drop off center at the optioned Flynn Ave property, with Burlington collecting the fees not been included in this analysis as a way to retain the revenue from the “opt-out” folks who prefer to use drop off centers?

The 2020 GBB study said 55.7% would still want to use the drop off center “if this city-wide collection system were available.” Why is nothing in the proposal before the PWC that addresses the demand for the drop off center? Why is the option for a municipally managed drop off center at the Flynn Ave. property which the city has an option to purchase not addressed? Residents who choose to reduce their trash amounts likely don’t want to pay for regular trash pickup that they don’t need.

Q. Why is the 339 Pine St. Municipal option the only one listed for the 15% and 25% “opt outs” and not the Flynn Ave. drop off center option?

Q. Does the City have a contractual obligation with CSDW preventing it from operating its own drop off center?

Q. Will the use of separately franchised and served geographical areas in Burlington lead to inequity between rates paid for the same service in different neighborhoods due to differences in the bids between different haulers?

Q. Can you explain what is meant by this statement in the memo under “Overall Model Analysis”?

“Gives clarity on the consolidated collection direction in the short term that may help resolve long-standing issues with Chittenden Solid Waste District regarding the Burlington Drop-Off Center at 339 Pine Street and the future of 195-201 Flynn Avenue where CSWD and the City have considered a future Drop-Off Center. “

Q. Can you explain the details about the City’s option to purchase the 195-201 Flynn property for use as the site of the municipal consolidated collection offices and a new drop off center to replace the currently closed Pine St. Center? When does the option expire?

Q. Doesn’t the proposed “hybrid” model (with the City just continuing to do Recycling and transferring the rest of the responsibilities to private haulers) defeat one of the purposes of consolidated collection since there will be City Recycling trucks and private hauler’s trucks both on the streets?

Q. How does the DPW support its assertion that the hybrid model is a “fully consolidated system” that best furthers the City’s efforts to reduce climate change impacts, reduce waste and insure cost containment into the future for residents?

Q. If a goal of consolidated collection is to reduce wasted resources by minimizing Burlington’s trash generation, how would the franchise model encourage and drive reductions in city trash and recycling volumes since private haulers would not be motivated to make that happen?
Q. Do you have data on the truck traffic that might be generated at the Flynn Ave. facility and vehicle traffic generated by the drop off center? This probably would be similar to the traffic that’s been historically seen at the Pine St. drop off location.

Following up question to an emailed response from Lee Perry on Monday, 6/14.

I had asked:

Can you tell me the solid waste revenue that Burlington received annually from trash that Burlington residents dropped at the CSWD Pine St. drop off location before it stopped allowing trash drop off?

The answer Lee provided was: “*From FY17 to current the total revenue generated from the Burlington DOC collected through solid waste generation tax fees were $3,977, or an avg. of $944.00/year. Some years were better than others as FY20, and FY21 were affected by the pandemic. FY17-19 were considered "normal" years, but CSWD did indicate that VT was in an economic slump during this period.”

Q. My follow up question, sent to Lee by EMAIL but not yet responded to:

Does this mean Burlington only received $3,977 from CSWD between 2017 and 2019, or an avg. of $944/year, from the payments made by folks who dropped trash off by the pound at the Pine St. drop off center?

Q. Do you know how many tons of trash was dropped off at the Pine St. drop off center over those same years? Were the payments to Burlington for dropped off trash based on the tons dropped off? Perhaps there was some other calculation used? (this was also asked to Lee via EMAIL on Monday 6/14 but I had expected to get answered at the PWC meeting.)
FW: Question about Flynn Ave. facility - revenue from Flynn Ave. waste drop off site with 25% opt-out

Wed 6/16/2021 9:36 AM
From: Solveig Overby
To: "soverby@sover.net"

Forwarded for printing.

From: Solveig Overby
Sent: Monday, June 14, 2021 4:52 PM
To: Lee Perry; Chapin Spencer
Cc: Robert Goulding
Subject: RE: Question about Flynn Ave. facility - revenue from Flynn Ave. waste drop off site with 25% opt-out

Lee,

This information is all very helpful, thank you! I see that the packet info has arrived so I'll look at that.

Do I understand that if Burlington wants to include a new trash drop-off at the Flynn Ave. location, Burlington would contract with CSWD to manage it, similarly to the way they managed the Pine St. drop off?

Do you have data on the truck traffic that might be generated at the Flynn Ave. facility and vehicle traffic generated by the drop off site? This probably would be similar to the traffic that's been historically seen at the Pine St. drop off.

And do I understand that it's still in discussions whether CSWD might restart the Pine St. drop off, perhaps expanded for better traffic flow?

Finally, are you saying that Burlington only received $3,977 from CSWD between 2017 and 2019, or an avg. of $944.00/year, from the payments made by folks who dropped trash off by the pound at the Pine St. drop off?

Do you know how many tons of trash was dropped off at Pine St. over those three years? Were the payments to Burlington for dropped off trash based on the tons dropped off there? Perhaps there was some other calculation used?

Solveig

From: Lee Perry
Sent: Monday, June 14, 2021 3:27 PM
To: Solveig Overby; Chapin Spencer
Cc: Robert Goulding
Subject: RE: Question about Flynn Ave. facility - revenue from Flynn Ave. waste drop off site with 25% opt-out

Hello Commissioner Overby,

Hopefully I have addressed all your concerns.
I'm still confused. So, the $4.0M cost is for purchase of the Flynn Ave site and construction of the business operations facility but not a drop off center to replace the one that closed on Pine St.?

*That is correct. Flynn Avenue, is a 3 acre parcel. DPW would use the 1 acre parcel located in the front of the property, and the remaining 2 acre parcel, could potentially be the location of the new CSWD drop off center. We have been in talks with CSWD about a possible expansion at 339 Pine St. that would allow for safer traffic flow, and would allow them to open up to accepting more waste streams.

If potentially 25% of Burlington residents might want to opt-out of the consolidated collection monthly plan and would do drop-off, wouldn't it make sense to include a revenue generating drop off site at Flynn Ave.? That way, Burlington could retain the opt-out residents' revenue rather than having those folks send it to South Burlington.

*CSWD is still looking at the option of locating a DOC at the Flynn Ave. site, but there is a criteria that needs to be met concerning traffic patterns in the South End. South End councilors do not want to see increased truck traffic going through South End neighborhoods, and do not support a DOC located there, until the Parkway is constructed, or a portion of the Parkway is constructed that would alleviate the additional truck traffic through those areas.

We should not walk away from handling that 25% and its revenue potential. Owning the drop off site, Burlington would also have the opportunity to initiate strategies for waste reduction through policies deployed at the drop off site.

*This is not a concept we have looked into, as CSWD operated the DOC's in their member communities.

I'm still waiting for the Consolidated Collection agenda item materials for Wednesdays meeting so perhaps the revenue opportunity and costs for a Burlington drop off location at the Flynn St. location has been included in the latest proposal.

*The materials are being sent out momentarily. There is no cost for a Burlington operated DOC figured in the conceptual budget for a municipal option. CSWD would be operating any potential DOC located in Burlington.

Can you tell me the solid waste revenue that Burlington received annually from trash dropped at the CSWD Pine St, drop off location before it stopped allowing trash drop off? I assume we have lost that revenue stream now since the CSDW Pine St. site is not taking Burlington drop-off trash.

*From FY17 to current the total revenue generated from the Burlington DOC collected through solid waste generation tax fees were $3,977, or an avg. of $944.00/year. Some years were better than others as FY20, and FY21 were affected by the pandemic. FY17-19 were considered "normal" years, but CSWD did indicate that VT was in an economic slump during this period. If you would like to get some further information on this, I can reach out to CSWD for more.

Also, I reviewed the video of the April 21 PWC meeting and you noted that the chart of projected resident monthly costs for the 25% drop off scenario was inaccurate because tipping fees had changed in the interim from when the franchise study was completed. I am assuming the material we will be getting today contains the corrected projected monthly comparable costs for the municipal vs franchise method under the various opt-out scenarios, including the anticipated 25% scenario.

*Yes the chart has been updated to reflect the correct 25% opt-out figures.

What are the current per ton tipping fees for solid waste and recycled materials? Is there a “tipping” fee now for compost material as well, and if so, what is that per ton?

*Tip fee for solid waste at Casella, is currently $144.40/ton.
Tip fee at the CSWD's Materials Recovery Facility is currently $80.00/ton.
Tip fee at CSWD's Green Mountain Compost is currently $60.00/ton, but will increase July 1 to $65.00/ton, for clean organics, and $85/ton, for contaminated organics.

Thank you for your patience,

Lee Perry

-----Original Message-----
From: Solveig Overby <soverby@burlingtonvt.gov>
Sent: Monday, June 14, 2021 10:29 AM
To: Lee Perry <lperry@burlingtonvt.gov>; Chapin Spencer <cspencer@burlingtonvt.gov>
Subject: RE: Question about Flynn Ave. facility - revenue from Flynn Ave. waste drop off site with 25% opt-out

Lee,

I'm still confused. So, the $4.0M cost is for purchase of the Flynn Ave site and construction of the business operations facility but not a drop off center to replace the one that closed on Pine St.?

If potentially 25% of Burlington residents might want to opt-out of the consolidated collection monthly plan and would do drop-off, wouldn't it make sense to include a revenue generating drop off site at Flynn Ave.? That way, Burlington could retain the opt-out residents' revenue rather than having those folks send it to South Burlington.

We should not walk away from handling that 25% and its revenue potential. Owning the drop off site, Burlington would also have the opportunity to initiate strategies for waste reduction through policies deployed at the drop off site.

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What are the current per ton tipping fees for solid waste and recycled materials? Is there a "tipping" fee now for compost material as well, and if so, what is that per ton?

Solveig

From: Solveig Overby <soverby@burlingtonvt.gov>
Sent: Monday, June 14, 2021 8:15 AM
To: Solveig Overby; Chapin Spencer
Subject: RE: Question about Flynn Ave. facility cost estimate for municipal consolidated collection option

Hello Rob,

The $3.6M Would be locating new facility at 339 Pine St. $4.0M cost estimate, is the total for purchase of
the CSWD property located on Flynn Ave $~520,000, construction of the 11,000Sq. ft. Building $~2.2M, and $~1.2M in associated construction fees. (Building demolition, architect, consultants, possible soil remediation, permitting, etc.)

None of our proposed costs involve a CSWD drop off center. 339 Pine St. would be difficult given the contamination of soils in that area. Let me know if this is enough information?

Best,

Lee

-----Original Message-----
From: Solveig Overby <soverby@burlingtonvt.gov>
Sent: Saturday, June 12, 2021 11:49 AM
To: Lee Perry <lperry@burlingtonvt.gov>; Chapin Spencer <cspencer@burlingtonvt.gov>
Subject: Question about Flynn Ave. facility cost estimate for municipal consolidated collection option

Chapin and Lee,

In your presentation to the TEUC on March 22, 2021 about the municipal consolidated collection option, and in prior presentations to the PWC, you have provided the info below about the new facility costs to support expanding Burlington's recycling collection service into a complete solid waste/recycling/organics municipal consolidated collection enterprise.

Where did the "Facility $3.6M - $4.0M" cost estimate come from? Is there another document that I'm missing that explains how that cost estimate was generated? How was that number arrived?

What is the "facility" to be purchased for that estimated cost? Is it the estimated cost to create the replacement drop-off location like the one that closed on Pine St.?

Solveig

Extract from "TEUC Memo Consolidated Collection 3-22-21 Final (1).pdf"

Capital Resources
We estimate needing to invest approximately $5.9M to $6.7M in capital funds to stand up this operation.

Facility $3.6M - $4.0M: Unfortunately, our 645 Pine St. location is unable to accommodate a new operation of this size. The 645 Pine site is limited in vehicle storage, employee parking, and office/meeting space. The site is at its maximum lot coverage for zoning and covered under the Pine Street Barge Canal Institutional Controls so any effort to eke out additional space would be very expensive and have impacts on other municipal operations.

Although the main functions of the program would occur off site, all repair and maintenance to the fleet would be conducted at Fleet Services located at 645 Pine St. Two possible locations to establish space to house the consolidated collection operations are:

1. 195-201 Flynn Avenue - The City has an option to purchase this site from Chittenden Solid Waste District for $500,000 to establish a drop off center. The 3-acre parcel would have approximately 1 acre beyond the estimated 2 acres needed for CSWD’s new drop off center. The remaining acre would likely be sufficient to accommodate the consolidated collection operations.

2. 339 Pine Street - The former location of the Public Works Department. The site may involve historic renovation restrictions, Pine Street Barge Canal Institutional Controls, and soil remediation efforts - all factors that carry risk and would likely increase costs.

This large facility investment makes a municipally operated system more challenging to establish.
Please note that this communication and any response to it will be maintained as a public record and may be subject to disclosure under the Vermont Public Records Act.