



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

BOARD OF HEALTH: 7-10-25

Hybrid Meeting- Recorded

LWVM Observer: Tom Krueger

Members in Attendance: Andrew Petty, Tom McMahon, Tom Massaro, Amanda

Given the ongoing issue with curbside trash removal, Dr. Massaro changed the agenda so that Mr. Petty could give the Directors Report first.

Director's Report

Curbside trash/recycling - Mr. Petty reminded the board that Republic (the trash and recycling removal company) and their workers, a Teamsters union, had gone on strike as of 6/30/25. This is now the 10th day of the strike with no obvious imminent resolution.

Mr. Petty said that MHD was lucky (compared to some other towns) in that we have a transfer station, and that Republic is sending a truck around. These trucks are manned by drivers who are flown in and given a list of streets to go to. As a result they don't know the town or its streets. There are close to 300 streets in MHD, 4 square miles, with many tight roads. The trucks start on Monday and proceed onwards. There are many missed collections, and Republic is given a list at the end of the day about these. The health department has been inundated with phone calls. As a priority Mr. Petty has told residents to stop putting recycling out and just trash as this is the greatest health risk.

The usual course of waste disposal is that Republic brings the trash to the transfer station. From there another company Waste Management then takes it.

As for recycling Republic "owns" this, meaning that they collect it which is then taken to a facility, Greenworks, where it is sorted and sold. Greenworks is owned by Republic and is now undergoing new construction. In the interim Waste Management is taking it to Billerica. With the strike the amount of recycling has vastly increased.

Residents are urged if possible to take their trash up to the transfer station, which has become extremely busy with thousands of cars a day. The transfer station is open 7am to 3:30 pm, but often the work is not done until 4-4:30. Staff have been coming in early and staying late - they are a dedicated and helpful group. Mr. Petty reminded residents that the entrance is now off Green Street. There is frequently queuing, but it does move along. When you get to the top, wait for a space. Don't park on the right. The employees are there to help.

Marty Flanagan has now transferred to be Assistant Waste Director and has been a huge help, but there is no clerk in the office. The office is getting up to 500 emails a day as well as calls that 4 people now answer. It is also possible to leave messages which will be answered. As to missed pickups, Republic is only doing entire streets, but if it is only 1-2 houses the health department is collecting.

Because of the volume, Republic has given the transfer station another large container that can be filled and hauled by Waste Management.

During a question and comment period, Mr. McMahon emphasized the outstanding help and attitudes of the employees. He did comment about "out of towners" using the transfer station and ways to prevent this. He mentioned that we have to assume this strike will keep going on, and it important to take your own trash to the transfer station, and to help others who can't.

Mr. Petty is giving information about the strike on an ongoing basis - CODE RED on the website. Trash regulations stipulate that all trash must be BAGGED and in a barrel with tight fitting lid. (This is to protect it from the weather as well as animals.) Recycling on the other hand must be loose, no plastic bags.

Further questions included: 1) what about hardship residents? They are to contact the HD to make arrangements; 2) How much trash is there? 50 tons a day with 2 large trucks and it is taken to Resco in Saugus; 3) What about additional collection bids? There aren't really any as large companies just buy trucks for their own needs, as each truck costs \$600K to \$1M. (When bidding with companies for the future, the companies will want to know the total amounts of trash, etc. so they can plan how many trucks, workers, etc.) These trucks are special for many reasons, but one is to control "leachate" the liquid slop that results from trash. If this leaks out, there is an extremely foul smell that is persistent, easily grows bacteria, and with a rain event washes into the ocean and beaches. 4) what to do if a truck misses a pickup? Leave the trash curbside, remove recycling, but when the trash is picked up, remove the barrel.

5) a comment about catching "out of towners" - hire someone to check addresses. 6) what about extending the time the TS is open? - Mr. Petty says it is very challenging as all are needed, they need breaks, etc. As for the amount of trash that can be collected,

there is a limit each day (50 tons) and by 3pm they are often at their capacity, so additional amount brought later can't be taken. 7) what about using an employee from another departments, say DPW? - Mr. Petty replies that they can be used for small jobs as they don't have the knowledge or expertise for other TS work. In addition since DPW workers can't take vacation in the winter, they take it in the summer, and they also have work to do. 8) what about a refund or penalties from Republic? It is not in the contract, and if it were, the bid from the company would be even higher. 9) another question about "out of towners" - a TV station and a posting on Patch suggested to Swampscotters to use the MHD TS. Mr. Petty was on top of this quickly, asking their addresses, etc.

On a related issue Mr. Petty started the discussion for the board about a future contract for trash and recycling collection beginning in September, 2026. It is likely that it will include more automation: one driver would drive a truck, use an automated arm to reach out for the barrel, and put it in the truck. This would reduce the cost and result in a savings as it would only require one worker not a second on the back of a truck. He sees that we need to move in that direction. The downtown, however, would be more difficult because of the narrow streets, etc. Perhaps there could be two systems, one for downtown and another for the rest of the town. This would also necessitate moving to standard size barrels. The cost to buy barrels for 8000 households could possible be spread over 10 years. These would need to be regulated and tracked, perhaps with an address on each barrel.

As for recycling, in the current contract Republic "owns" this, but it is costing them \$300K per year. This fact means in the future, MHD and a company would need to share the cost and would have to "cap" the amount of residential recycling per week.

As to have a separate contract of 10 years for trash and 5 years for recycling, Mr. Petty said this is very unlikely. No company is going to bid for 10 years, 5 at most, because all of the landfills in MA will be full and closed by 2030.

Community Health/CAHM: Dr. Massaro reported that the committee is meeting regularly with the UMASS Boston people and hope to have the 40-45 questionnaire ready by mid August.

Charter Committee: Dr. Massaro sits on the committee which has met 24 times since its inception. Their work is to provide a MHD "constitution", as currently there is no organizing structure, just by-laws and MA general laws. The committee has completed a Version A which can be read on the website; Version B is expected to be out by August. NOTE - the charter does NOT change anything; it just codifies what is being done. The BOH is referred to in chapter 8.6. Dr. Massaro will report back regularly to the group.

On a parallel issue, Mr. McMahon discovered the existence of another group, Master Plan Advisory Group, MPAG, which is looking into the organization of all departments broadly, seeing what redundancies exist, what might be combined, etc. There is some skepticism about the group, but the aim is not to lose control of boards, etc. but to make life easier, e.g., building maintenance. This is unlikely to be an option for the HD, as with sharing employees, because there is no overlap. Mr. McMahon volunteered to serve on this committee. Mr. Petty is required to participate.

Bills - were read by Mr. McMahon

Beaches - Grace Oliver is closed until a clean sample is obtained. Crocker Park water sample was high, but remains open pending a second sample. Note Riverside is not a beach so is not tested.

At ~8:30pm the board went into executive session.