

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Selectmen and Dennis Piendak  
From: Matt Zettek, Dracut Recycling Coordinator  
Date: November 8, 2012  
Re: Cost Saving Trash & Recycling Program

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In an effort to encourage greater recycling that results in significant waste reduction, our neighboring communities are implementing new trash/recycling techniques. They report less complaints, improved street/community appearance, and significant savings. At the same time residents have reported self satisfaction from their contribution to the overall environment.

There are a number of attractive options available to Dracut that promise to improve services to the residents we serve. Currently, Dracut residents are allowed to put out an unlimited amount of trash curbside (Attachment A) as well as a weekly curbside recycling program. The Town has generated an average of 11,000 – 12,000 tons of trash annually over the past four years. In FY14, Dracut will save \$73 per ton for every additional ton of material that gets recycled instead of being disposed of as trash.

The first section below summarizes solid waste related programs in the area (also outlined in Attachment B). The second section describes a course of recommended action for the Town to consider in bringing about various benefits including saving significant monies that would otherwise be paid to a private vendor for trash disposal.

**I. Other Municipal Programs**

Most communities statewide and in our area of the State have implemented waste reduction programs over the past several years as a way to save money and increase recycling. The following summarizes the solid waste / recycling programs of our neighboring communities. Nearly all have implemented waste reduction efforts in recent years in order to control costs. A majority of these communities have established an automated trash collection program as the primary means to reduce and control costs while providing an equitable service to residents.

*Andover*

- Curbside Trash* - 4 barrel / bag limit (135 gallons max. total) (50 lb limit per bag/barrel);
- Bulky Items (e.g. chair; mattress)* - 1 per week; paid through taxes;
- Curbside Recycling* – Bi-weekly and Mandatory; Single Stream (manual collection);
- White Goods (e.g. refrigerator; air conditioner)* – no town program;

*CRT's* ("Cathode Ray Tubes" - e.g. TV's; computer monitors) – 1 Drop-off event per year (fees);  
*Yard Waste* – Curbside collection of Leaves only (5 times in spring and 5 times in fall); Drop-off of Leaves and Grass during spring, summer and fall (\$25 permit) at Bald Hill site;

*Other* – based on CY2010 data, there was 2,223 pound of trash per household versus 787 pounds of recyclables per household;

### ***Billerica***

*Curbside Trash* - Automated collection (2009) using 64 gallon carts; paid through taxes; overflow bags cost \$2 per bag (@ local stores;

*Bulky Items* - scheduled collection by vendor; paid through taxes (some by fee);

*Curbside Recycling* – weekly; dual stream;

*White Goods* - scheduled pickup by vendor; fee (\$15-\$25) involved;

*CRT's* - scheduled pickup by vendor; fee (\$15-\$25) involved;

*Yard Waste* - Curbside collection (5 in spring and 5 in fall);

*Other* – realized 18% (3,000 ton) decrease in trash and 13% increase in recycling after going Automated; curbside recycling rate had been 10-11% of curbside trash but increased to and held steady at 20% after Automated;

### ***Chelmsford***

*Curbside Trash* – 2 barrel/bag limit (64 gallon total); paid through taxes while overflow bags cost \$2 per bag (33 gallon size);

*Bulky Items* – one per week; paid through taxes (some by fee);

*Curbside Recycling* – Bi-weekly; single stream (2010) (manual collection)

*White Goods* – scheduled pickup by vendor; fee (\$15-\$25) involved;

*CRT's* – scheduled pickup by vendor; fee (\$15-\$25) involved;

*Yard Waste* – no Leaf and Grass related service; two no-cost Brush drop-off events per year;

*Other* - visible mandatory recycling in place since 2006; significant savings after 2 barrel/bag trash limit implemented;

### ***Lowell***

*Curbside Trash* – Automated collection (March 2009) using 68 gallon carts; paid through combination of taxes and trash fee (\$125 /year included on water bill) while overflow bags cost \$1.50 per bag (35 gallon); Seniors (65+) only can get smaller (32 gallon) cart for \$32 /year;

*Bulky Items* – scheduled pickup by vendor; fee (\$5-\$12) involved;

*Curbside Recycling* – Weekly, dual stream;

*White Goods* - scheduled collection by vendor; fee (\$17) involved

*CRT's* – scheduled collection by vendor; fee (\$12-\$22) involved;

*Yard Waste* – weekly curbside collection from April – November;

*Other* – recently expanded recycling drop-off center;

*Note* – Automated collection brought about a decrease of almost 1,000 tons of trash per month in the first year and a related increase in recycling by about 30%;

### ***Methuen***

*Curbside Trash* – unlimited; paid through taxes;

*Bulky Items* – 1 per week; paid through taxes;

*Curbside Recycling* – Bi-weekly; single stream (2010) (manual collection)

*White Goods* – scheduled pickup by City; fee (\$25) involved;

*CRT's* – scheduled pickup by City; fee \$10-\$25) involved;

*Yard Waste* – Weekly Spring and fall curbside collections by City; paid through taxes;

*Other* – all material involved in the curbside services listed above, along with Construction & Demolition related waste, scrap metal and Brush, are available 6 days per week at the Methuen Transfer Station;

*Note* – Enforced no cardboard with trash collection program (2006) and implementation of single stream recycling (2010) as major initiatives to save money by reducing trash and increasing recycling.

### ***Tewksbury***

*Curbside Trash* – Automated collection (2009) using 64 gallon carts (townhouses and condos also added into municipal program at same time using 35 gallon carts); paid through taxes; \$5 stickers per bag can be purchased from vendor if additional material;

*Bulky Items* – scheduled collection by vendor; paid through taxes (some by fee);

*Curbside Recycling* - Bi-weekly; dual stream;

*White Goods* - scheduled pickup by vendor; fee (\$15-\$25) involved;

*CRT's* - scheduled pickup by vendor; fee (\$15-\$25) involved;

*Yard Waste* - curbside (10 collections per year);

*Other* – realized 8.5% (929 tons) decrease after Automated despite large increase (1,910) in # of units served; realized 45% increase in recycling after Automated;

### ***Tyngsborough***

*Curbside Trash* - Automated collection (2009) using 64 gallon carts; paid through taxes; \$5 per additional bag of trash paid to vendor;

*Bulky Items* – scheduled collection by vendor; fee (\$15) on most items and paid to Town (BOH);

*Curbside Recycling* – Bi-weekly; dual stream;  
*White Goods* – scheduled collection by vendor; fee (\$15-\$25) involved;  
*CRT's* – scheduled pickup by vendor; fee (\$15-\$25) involved;  
*Yard Waste* – curbside (4 collections per year (2 in spring; 2 in fall));

*Other* – realized tonnage decrease and savings after going Automated;

## **II. Saving \$ in Dracut by going Automated**

Establishing an automated trash collection program will save the Town significant monies while providing an equitable service and visibly improved community. Funds that have been spent paying a private vendor for trash disposal will be freed up for other municipal services (e.g. police, fire, schools). There will be no changes regarding what can be put curbside but the program will change how material needs to be put at the curb.

Residents have repeatedly responded well to initiatives geared towards reducing trash and increasing recycling. The hugely successful cardboard recycling enforcement program begun several years ago has been our main attempt to decrease trash, increase recycling and save on disposal costs. We also have the added advantage of learning from other communities that have recently implemented similar trash related services so that the program we establish will best address the specific needs of the Town.

### ***Automated Trash Collection Program***

All of the households currently participating in our municipal program will continue to receive weekly trash and recycling related services. Each household will receive a wheeled cart (“toter”) to be used for putting household trash curbside. In the multi-family buildings that are served in our program (between 2-4 units), each household will receive a toter. Although many communities are now looking at providing a smaller toter for their programs, it is recommended that the 64 gallon size be provided to each household currently participating in Dracut’s program. This toter size holds the same volume of trash as two standard sized trash barrels typically seen at the curb.

On their collection day, residents wheel their toters to the curb so the trash truck can have access for an automated pickup. The current system of a scheduled collection that residents use to get rid of their White Goods (e.g. refrigerator; air conditioner) and CRT’s (e.g. TV’s; computer screens) will be expanded to include Bulky Items (household trash items that won’t fit in a bag or barrel (e.g. chair; mattress). If a resident generates excess trash beyond what can be held in the toter, overflow trash bags will be available, for purchase, at local stores.

### ***Recycling Program***

The Town will continue with its' convenient weekly curbside recycling program. Depending on recycling market conditions, residents will either recycle using the current two sort (paper and containers) system or in a single stream fashion (all recyclables mixed together). Although some Massachusetts communities have established automated recycling programs simultaneously with automated trash, it is not anticipated that it would be most cost effective for the Town at this time.

Our recycling program has recently been encouraging residents to use their own containers (e.g. barrel) labeled for recycling instead of the smaller town issued bins. The implementation of automated trash will help expand this initiative since barrels owned by residents previously used for trash will be freed up for use as containers to hold recyclables. This increased capacity, typically a 32 gallon barrel compared to an 18 gallon recycling bin, helps make recycling easier for residents. The Town will continue to provide bumper sticker Recycling labels to residents at No Cost that can be used to label their own barrel for identification by recycling and trash collection personnel.

### ***Budget Impact***

Establishing an automated trash collection program will result in significant savings for the Town. The primary savings will be realized from sending less tonnage for disposal at the Covanta Waste to Energy facility in Haverhill. In addition, vendors are also able to keep collection costs lower with an automated program. Although there is a slight increase in resources needed for the increase in recycling, far fewer personnel are needed for trash collection with additional savings realized from the reduction in related costs (e.g. Workmen's Comp).

Based on results from other programs and our own historical tonnage figures, it is believed the Town will save approximately \$100,000 annually in overall solid waste and recycling related costs by going automated.

### ***Additional Benefits***

Going automated provides additional benefits to the community along with the savings and equitableness achieved through the program. Many residents will find that using a single wheeled toter is easier than bringing multiple smaller barrels or bags of trash to the curb. The sturdy nature of the 64 gallon toter helps residents in several ways. Since the toter will be provided to each household at no charge, residents will be able to avoid future costs for new or replacement trash barrels/lids like they have currently been incurring. On windy days, the sturdy

nature of the larger toter also helps prevent it being blown over with the resultant spill causing blight and nuisance issues. Resident's toters will be less susceptible to damage from weather and handling.

The automated collection system with a mechanical arm lifting the toter and directly dumping the trash into the truck also helps prevent spills and material being left on the ground. The town-wide use of covered toters also greatly reduces the amount of litter generated by animals/birds that currently access bagged trash on the ground or in barrels without lids. Although certainly not the primary reason for going automated, the Town will also benefit aesthetically by the tidy nature of each household having their trash out in a uniform manner.

### ***Public Outreach***

We have found that Dracut residents have responded favorably to previous changes in the solid waste and recycling program due to public outreach efforts. To help ensure a smooth transition to an automated trash collection program, a comprehensive multi-media outreach program will unfold over several months prior to the implementation of the program. The program will involve both town officials and the vendor who will be providing the service. The primary focus will be on explaining the automated service and encouraging residents to ask questions prior to the start of service.

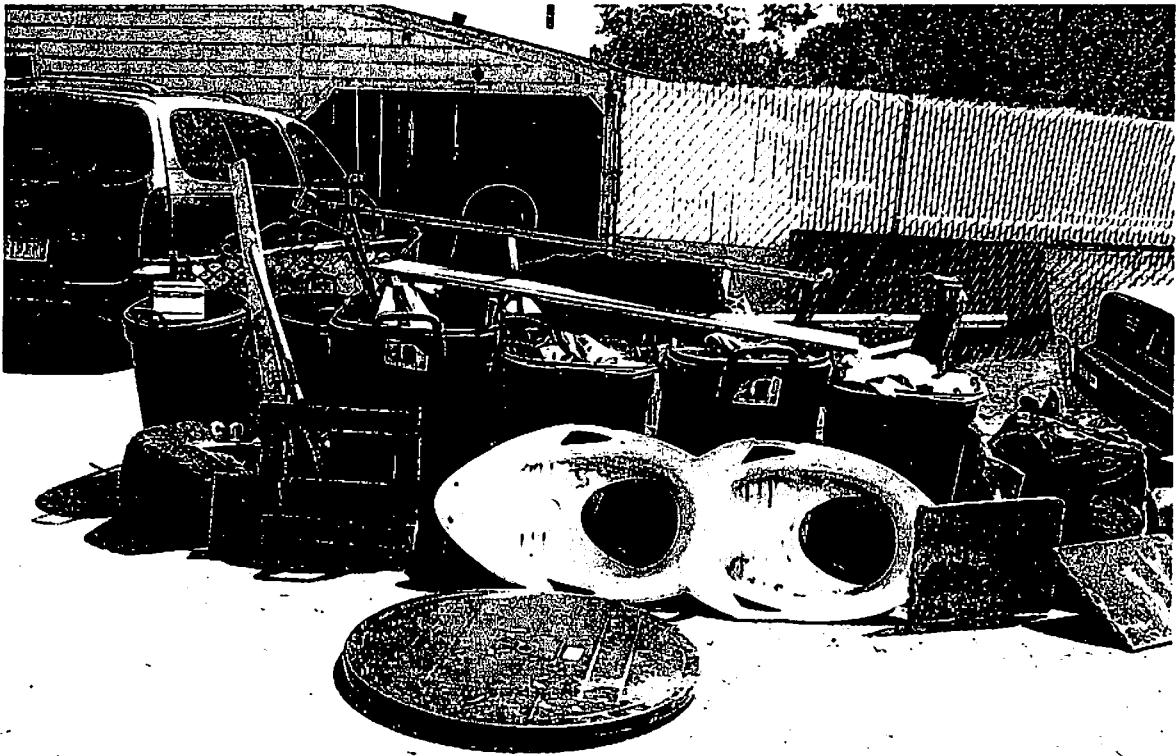
The public outreach program will include:

- Public Meetings
- Town of Dracut Website
- Cable Access Television
- Local media (e.g. Newspapers)
- Public Information Display (e.g. Library, Earth Day, June Town Meeting, etc.)
- Town-wide Mailing

After implementation, it will be important to provide periodic updates to the public about how the program is working. The successful engagement of the public through these outreach efforts will help ensure the program's long term success and sustainability.

ATTACHMENT A

Examples of unlimited trash policy excesses:

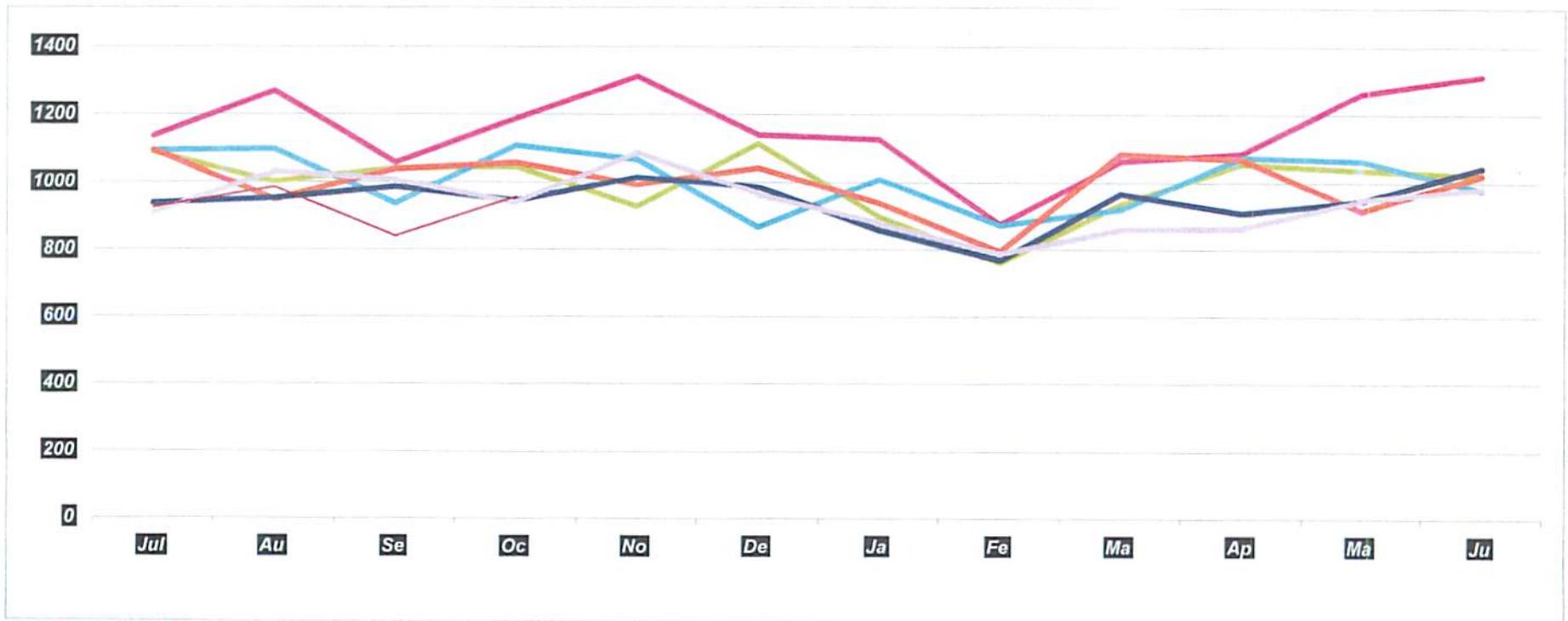


Summary of Solid Waste Recycling Related Programs in the Area

Program Type	Andover	Billerica	Chelmsford	Lowell	Methuen	Tewksbury	Tyngsborough
<b>Curbside Trash</b>	4 barrel limit (135 gal. max); 50 lb. limit per bag/barrel	Automated Collection w/ 64 gal. cart; paid through taxes	2 barrel/bag limit (64 gal. total); paid through taxes; Overflow Bags cost \$2 per bag (33 gal.)	Automated Collection w/ 68 gal. cart; paid through comb. taxes & trash fee (\$125/year included on H2O bill); Overflow Bags cost \$1.50 (35 gal.); Seniors only can get 32 gal. cart (\$32 per year fee)	Unlimited; paid through taxes	Automated Collection w/ 64 gal. cart; paid through taxes; \$5 per sticker for each bag with Overflow material	Automated Collection w/ 64 gal. cart; paid through taxes; \$5 per additional bag of trash paid to vendor
<b>Bulky Items</b>	1 per week; paid through taxes	Scheduled collection by vendor; paid through taxes (some by fee)	One per week; paid through taxes (some by fee)	Scheduled collection by vendor; fee (\$5-\$12) involved	One per week; paid through taxes	Scheduled collection by vendor; paid through taxes (some by fees)	Scheduled collection by vendor; fee (\$15) on most items & paid to Town (POW)
<b>Curbside Recycling</b>	Bi-weekly & Mandatory; Single Stream (manual); paid through taxes	Weekly; Dual Stream	Bi-weekly; Single Stream (manual)	Weekly; Dual Stream	Bi-weekly; Single Stream (manual)	Bi-weekly; dual stream	Bi-weekly; dual stream
<b>White Goods</b>	No town program	Scheduled collection by vendor; fee (\$15-\$25) involved	Scheduled collection by vendor; fee (\$15-\$25) involved	Scheduled collection by vendor; fee (\$17) involved	Scheduled pickup by City; fee (\$25) involved; drop-off also available	Scheduled collection by vendor; fee (\$15-\$25) involved	Scheduled collection by vendor; fee (\$15-\$25) involved
<b>Cathode Ray Tubes (e.g. TV)</b>	1 Drop-off event per year	Scheduled collection by vendor; fee (\$15-\$25) involved	Scheduled collection by vendor; fee (\$15-\$25) involved	Scheduled collection by vendor; fee (\$12-\$22) involved	Scheduled pickup by City; fee (\$10-\$25) involved; drop-off also available	Scheduled collection by vendor; fee (\$15-\$25) involved	Scheduled collection by vendor; fee (\$15-\$25) involved
<b>Yard Waste</b>	Curbside collection of leaves only (5 times in Spring and 5 in Fall); Drop-off of leaves & grass during Spring, Summer & Fall (\$25 permit)	Curbside Collection (5 times in Spring and 5 in Fall)	No leaf and grass related service; two no cost brush Drop-Off events per year	Weekly curbside collection from April November	Weekly curbside collection in Spring & Fall; paid through taxes	Curbside collection (10 times per year)	Curbside collection (2 times in Spring & 2 times in Fall)
<b>Other</b>	Based on CY10 data, an average of 2223 lbs. of trash per household vs. 787 lbs. of recyclables annually	Realized 18% (3,000 ton) decrease in trash and 13% increase in recycling after Automated; recycling rate from 11% to steady 20%	Visible Mandatory recycling; significant savings since 2 barrel /bag limit	Realized decrease of almost 1,000 tons per month after going Automated & recycling increase of about 30%	Enforced no Cardboard in trash and Single Stream (manual) recycling programs major trash reduction/\$	Realized 8.5% (929 ton) decrease after going Automated despite nearly 2000 Household increase in units served along with 45% increase in recycling	Realized tonnage decrease and savings after going Automated

ATTACHMENT B

	AVG is (FY06 & FY07)	FY 2008	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012	FY013
Jul	1136.04	1093.6	1089.19	1095.25	936.22	904.75	923.6
Aug	1268.94	1097.21	1000.19	946.95	950.82	1032.33	983.68
Sep	1058.19	934.98	1041.33	1039.16	984.49	1006.83	838.55
Oct	1187.92	1107.8	1045.6	1057.96	943.66	936.5	955.01
Nov	1312.97	1066.49	925.45	991.17	1013.41	1090.17	
Dec	1140.25	864.95	1114.2	1042.74	984.84	963.64	
Jan	1126.82	1007.84	896.09	937.33	856.16	876.07	
Feb	873.99	870.65	759.63	793.57	767.93	784.82	
Mar	1061.72	917.15	933.59	1084.36	964.33	859.36	
Apr	1086.07	1073.48	1054.39	1068.97	906.97	862.46	
May	1263.25	1063.99	1036.79	914.35	943.68	946.3	
Jun	1314.9	976.56	1021.83	1021.07	1043.52	981.83	
	13,831.06	12,074.70	11,918.28	11,992.88	11,296.03	11,245.06	



Average is FY06 & 07