



Special Town Meeting

December 11, 2023

A Special Town Meeting was held on Monday, December 11, 2023 in the Richard H. Smith Town Hall Auditorium. The meeting was attended by the Board of Selectmen including First Selectman Carol Jones, Selectman Duane Gates, and Selectman Kathryn A. Russell. Guests Jennifer Weymouth from DEEP and Kristen Brown from WasteZero were there along with members of the Waste Reduction Committee. Also in attendance were Registrars of Voters Lori Gregan and Michael Harris, Deputy Registrar of Voters Kim Olson, and approximately 400 residents.

First Selectman Jones called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Gates made a motion to appoint Rick Daniels as moderator which was seconded by Mark Reyher. The motion was approved unanimously. Daniels appointed Amy Winchell to act as clerk of the meeting. Daniels then read the call and a safety statement from the Fire Marshal because of the full house. He added that there would be presentations involving the proposed ordinance followed by statements and/or questions from the audience.

The motion to approve item **A** was made by Jones and seconded by Dorothy DeMichael:

A. To approve actions of the Board of Selectmen's regular meeting of November 28, 2023:

Appointments:

Community Health Committee: (2-year term)

Tracy R. Woodcock (Regular)	Term to expire: 12/01/2025
Nancy O'Neill-McGee (Regular)	Term to expire: 12/01/2025
Joyce A. Berardis (Regular)	Term to expire: 12/01/2025

DISCUSSION: Jones explained some of the responsibilities of the Community Health Committee including keeping the local food pantry stocked and managing the Backpack Program for food insecure children.

There being no further discussion, a voice vote was held. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

The motion to approve item **B** was made by Renee LaMark-Muir and seconded by Tom Groth:

B. To discuss and act on the following ordinance proposed and approved by the Board of Selectmen at their regular meeting of November 28, 2023:

The Town of Deep River hereby adopts a UNIT BASED PRICING PROGRAM, otherwise known as "Pay As You Throw" (PAYT), effective April 22, 2024, which shall require that all residential households ("residential generators") who deliver otherwise acceptable household waste to the Transfer Station directly, rather than through the use of a commercial hauler, shall use specially designed and labeled plastic garbage bags. Household waste not contained in such specially labeled bags will not be accepted for disposal at the Transfer Station.

The purpose of the PAYT Program is to use economic incentives to reduce the amount of avoidable waste being generated by town residents.

The specially labeled plastic bags will be available for purchase only by residents from the Town. Bags shall be available in three sizes: 33 gallon at a price of \$2.00 per bag; 13 gallons at a price of \$1.35 per bag and 8 gallons at \$.95 per bag. The funds generated from the sale of the garbage bags will be deposited onto the town's general fund to offset the costs of the PAYT program and the capital and operational costs of the Transfer Station.

Any person who violates the terms of this ordinance shall be treated as a "residential violator" under Section 10-Solid Waste Ordinance of the Town of Deep River. Such violation may result in fines or termination of a resident's use of the Transfer Station.

Prior to the effective date of the ordinance, the Town of Deep River shall adopt a subsidy program to assist those with low incomes with the cost of purchasing bags, low income to be verified through qualification for other town benefits for low-income residents.

DISCUSSION: Jennifer Weymouth from the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection spoke of the current waste crisis in our state and the success of our local food scraps pilot program. We are being called a State leader in sustainable materials management as a result of this program's success. She also noted that trash tipping fees had doubled in the last decade and will continue to rise as we truck our trash out of state. The PAYT program would make our trash system fairer and more equitable by giving those using the transfer station more control over how much they spend on their own trash disposal, much like how we currently control how much electricity we use. Kristen Brown from WasteZero made a brief presentation of the slide show shown at multiple information

sessions preceding this meeting. It showed how the PAYT program would work in Deep River emphasizing that the point was to increase recycling thereby reducing the amount of trash being brought to the transfer station for trucking out. She noted that this program has been successful in about 500 communities in New England and that the average household is able to reduce their trash by about 45%. She added that the Board of Selectmen ad-hoc Committee on Waste Reduction had vetted many different options and found PAYT to be the best fit for Deep River. Lenore Grunko, chair of the Waste Reduction Committee, spoke briefly about how this program would help townspeople reduce the amount of trash they create for the good of all taxpayers and the environment.

Multiple residents spoke on various aspects of the situation. Many were concerned about the impact these additional fees would have on the elderly and those on fixed incomes or with young children. Most of the people who spoke were concerned about the current lack of control over the usage of our transfer station. Out-of-towners frequently bring their trash as well as contractors bringing debris from worksites. Taxpayers would like to see better monitoring of the facility including reconfiguration of the location, installation of a gate, more proactive personnel and a police presence. Waste could be regulated by better monitoring at the transfer station. They would also like to see a “share shed” allowing residents to carry some items out of the transfer station. Many asked for different alternatives and not just PAYT or do nothing. A large number of those using the transfer station already recycle so this is just another fee for them.

A few attempts were made to move the question, but Daniels would not recognize them until more people had been allowed an opportunity to speak. At 8:10 he recognized a **motion made by Gary Clark and seconded by David Cook to move the question.** A voice vote was held. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

A vote on item **B** was held by paper ballot. Registrars of Voters Gregan and Harris, assisted by deputy ROV Kim Olson and former Selectman Jim Olson conducted the vote using the voter registration list and most recent grand list to qualify voters with photo identification. Voting began at 8:10 and ended at 10:15. Counting was done in public multiple times by multiple people with the results as follows:

YES- 94 / NO- 280 The motion was defeated.

The motion to adjourn was made by Jim Olson and seconded by Joyce Berardis. The motion was approved, and the meeting was adjourned at 10:41pm.

ATTEST: Amy M. Winchell, MCTC
Town Clerk