

MEMORANDUM

DRAFT

To: Nat Tupper – Town Manager

From: Erik S. Street, Director of Public Works

CC:

Date: 1-6-20

Re: Transfer Station Safety Issues

Nat,

I would like to offer this memo in response to councilor Casey's request for additional information regarding safety issues at the Transfer Station.

In 2015, the recycling committee and transfer station staff started talking about how they could improve recycling rates and curb transfer station operational cost. New programs were discussed, which lead into larger discussions about the facility and what waste management and recycling would look like for Yarmouth in the future. It became apparent early on that facility changes were needed, and safety needed to be a priority if the Transfer Station were to remain in service.

Throughout these discussions the following safety issues were identified by staff;

1. Traffic volume has increased, and a large portion of the traffic does not stop at the stop sign and enters the disposal / recycling area too fast.
2. Residents are asked to park in designated parking spots for trash disposal and recycling. Some people drive in while others back in, introducing many unpredictable traffic movements and conflicts. There have been several vehicle accidents as a result.
3. There are no parking spaces that accommodate vehicles with trailers. As a result, they often impede the flow of traffic by blocking a portion of the travel lane or take up 3 or 4 parking spots or block service doors.
4. Pedestrians navigate between parked, backing cars and traffic passing through the facility in order to access the center recycling building. There have been many close calls and some collisions between pedestrians and vehicles – one resulted in injury.
5. The road to the bulky waste area is in very close proximity to the MSW compactor and is not designed for two-way traffic. Traffic waiting to access the disposal area often blocks the intersection and creates conflict between vehicles as they navigate to the different station areas.

In 2016, The Town contracted with Woodard & Curran to assess the facility. In their report dated December 5, 2016, Woodard & Curran identified several safety concerns. (See Attached Report) In summary they were as follows:

1. Vehicle Congestion around the compactor area further hindered by an array of different traffic movements and vehicle sizes.
2. The need for pedestrian movement amongst the congested areas.

“Overall, it was observed during the site visits that mixing of the vehicle and pedestrian at the compactor, recycling containers and the existing garage causes congestion, reducing efficient traffic flow and increases the risk of accidents”

3. Traffic patterns with-in the facility are not predictable and lead to confusion, congestion and safety issues. Width of bulky waste road not adequate for two-way traffic, striping is confusing, limited signage. (Some of the striping and signage issues have been addressed since the report).

Pictures of Traffic Congestion





History

Since 2015, Yarmouth Police has responded to 8 calls for minor vehicle accidents. These all had to do with the traffic movements around the compactor, recycling building and swap shop area.

October 2018 –Vehicle hit the compactor wall. Town filed an insurance claim for \$3900.00 for damage done to the compactor wall. Driver accidentally hit the gas instead of the brake. We were very fortunate no one was walking in front of the hopper at that time. Air bag deployed, windshield was broken, driver's door was buckled.



March 2019 – Town truck backed into by a resident visiting the transfer station.

August 2019 - Pedestrian knocked down by vehicle – transported to MMC

Lessons Learned by Other Towns

In November of 2014, a 79-year-old man was killed at the Cape Elizabeth Transfer Station by a driver backing up to the hopper. The vehicle backed into the man, pushing him through a fence and into the empty hopper. Investigation revealed that it was driver error.

In 2016, the widow brought a wrongful death suit against the Town, claiming the Town is responsible for her husband's death because "The Town implemented a plan where vehicles back into the hopper disposal area". The case was settled out of court.

Not long after this accident, another pedestrian was hit by a vehicle backing into their swap shop area.

Below is a video link to a channel 13 I team report discussing the incidents at the Cape Elizabeth facility.

<https://wgme.com/news/i-team/i-team-pedestrian-hit-at-cape-elizabeth-recycling-center-as-town-works-to-improve-safety?jwsourc=em>

As a result, Cape redesigned their transfer station and eliminated backing movements within the trash and recycling area. I share this information because Yarmouth and Cape Elizabeth, before their transfer station was rebuilt, shared many of the same traffic characteristics, layout and safety issues.

Present Issues

Growth - The Yarmouth Transfer Station was built in 1989. There have been 552 new homes permitted since 1992.

Traffic Counts on January 10th, 2017 showed that we serviced 761 cars on Saturday and 959 cars on Sunday. Peak times 10:AM to 3:00PM – counts ranged from a low of 66 cars per hour up to 165 cars per hr. Staff believes the traffic volumes on weekends and certain weekday times have increased since then (a traffic study would need to be done to confirm)

Fire Training Facility is active 100 days per year – peak times are April through September. 4-week academy in August. Majority of trainings are on weekends and during transfer station operating hours. Training sessions add 30 to 40 cars to the daily traffic flow -twice a day.

Satellite Recycling Sites are closed, and we are now seeing additional traffic at the Transfer Station as a result. Positive note – Recycling contamination is under control.

We are now having to bring in additional part-time staff on Saturdays and Sundays to help manage the volume of material coming in during those days.

The Saturday after Christmas we made 4 bales of cardboard – a record for one day. Cardboard bale production is up overall. Seeing a lot of new faces in the facility

Recommendations

Transfer station staff, recycling committee and I are very concerned about safety at this facility. We feel very strongly that any new program or facility design needs to address traffic flow, minimize turning / backing movements and pedestrian / vehicle interaction. It is our recommendation that facility and safety improvements be done as a complete package so that the PAYT / Recycling Program can function as intended and staff can safely and efficiently do their job.

