

WORKING DRAFT Memorandum

To: Natick Board of Selectmen

CC: Melissa A. Malone, Town Administrator
William Chenard, Deputy Town Administrator, Operations
Jeremy Marsette, Director, Public Works
Thomas Hladick, Deputy Director, Public Works

From: Jillian Wilson Martin, Sustainability Coordinator

Date: September 6, 2018

Subject: Compost Pilot Next Steps

As identified in the Town of Natick's recent waste characterization study, food waste comprises 41% of residential solid waste, or approximately 2,500 tons of trash annually. This represents a tremendous opportunity to achieve tip fee savings and reduce the Town's environmental impacts, as food waste can be composted at a discount of more than 30% versus trash.

The Natick Department of Public Works (DPW) has been exploring this opportunity for some time, and is nearing the end of a 500 household curbside composting pilot that began in June 2016. In May 2018, the Sustainability Coordinator provided the Board of Selectmen with an update on the future of the Town's curbside composting pilot and shared information regarding a new model it was exploring. At that time, the Board provided valuable feedback, and pilot members have since completed surveys and conducted three focus groups to discuss what's next (see Appendix for a summary of survey findings).

Today we are ready to present our plan to increase composting by incentivizing curbside, drop-off and backyard composting options. The goals of Pilot 2.0 is to reduce the Town's tipping fees and further build the curbside composting market in Natick such that the Town is poised to take advantage of emerging solutions and trends in solid waste, such as co-collection and regionalization, that have proven cost savings. Through this program, we will seek to achieve the following targets:

- Increase the number of households participating from 500 to 1,500
- Test a compost drop-off program with 100 residents
- Increase the number of residents who purchase home composting bins from 40 to 100

Pilot 2.0 would run from November 2018 - June 2021, for two years and eight months, which would allow us to get back on a fiscal calendar schedule. We have permission from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection to use funds from our Recycling Dividends¹ account to support the startup costs associated with a drop off program and to subsidize backyard composting bins and education efforts. We are also petitioning MassDEP to

¹ Recycling Dividends is a MassDEP grant program that is supported by the Green Communities Act. It provides funding to the Town based on its adoption of recycling best practices - the more we follow best practices, the more money we earn. It can only be spent on approved solid waste reduction activities, and we are petitioning MassDEP to add compostable bags based on the feedback we received from existing pilot members. Natick currently has a balance of approximately \$70,000 in its Recycling Dividends account, and anticipates receiving additional \$60,000 in RDP funds during the length of Pilot 2.0.

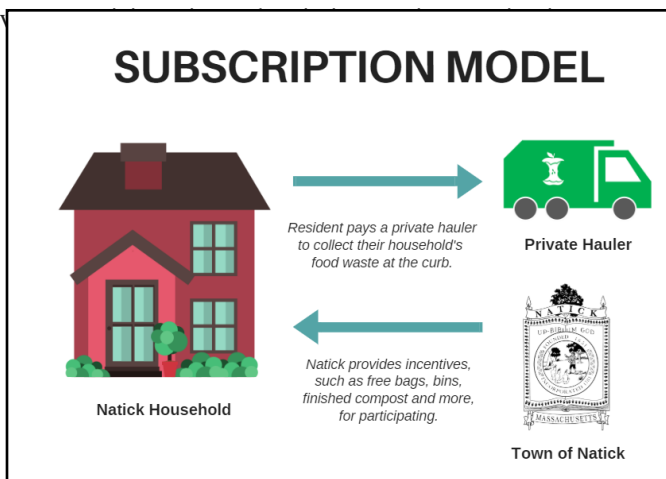
reconsider their criteria for Recycling Dividends to fund incentives for a subscription model. Additional details on our proposed plans and budget, by year and funding source, are provided below.

Curbside Composting - Transition to Subscription Service

A survey of the Town's existing pilot members found that composting/diverting food waste is important or very important to more than 95% of participants, and that approximately 75% of participants are willing to pay a private hauler to collect their compost. An additional 450 residents have signed a waitlist to join such a program. In response, the Town plans to offer all residents incentives starting in November 2018.

To facilitate participation, the Town will provide residents with information on private haulers offering weekly curbside compost collection services, and residents will then contract directly with their hauler of choice. Based on initial research, residents can expect to pay between \$1.50-\$5/week, depending on their hauler of choice.

Because the Town will benefit from their actions in the form of lower tipping fees, pilot members believe the Town should support their efforts by providing incentives that help offset a portion of their costs.² Of potential incentives, surveyed members prefer free compostable bags and startup materials, such as a curbside bin and kitchen container. We currently have a large supply of compostable bags from the existing pilot and a small amount of money leftover from the entry fee Pilot 1.0 members paid to participate in the program. To incentivize residents to participate in Pilot 2.0, we plan to provide a year's supply of bags (180 bags) for free to the first 500 residents who sign up in the next phase.



We have asked MassDEP, which has already provided Natick with a grant to cover the cost of a starter kit that includes curbside bins and kitchen containers, to allow the Town to use funds from its Recycling Dividends grant to purchase and provide compostable bags to all Pilot 2.0 members. We are awaiting further consideration. In the absence of their funding, we will work with the DPW to consider requesting this cost as part of the FY 2019 operating budget. In the absence of fully funding the bags, we plan to continue to sell them, at cost, to residents via the existing pilot's revolving fund and are working with local grocery stores to offer them in addition to the Pay-As-You-Throw bags³.

New Drop-Off Option

² 75% of pilot members who responded to the survey said they were likely to sign up for a curbside compost subscription service; that number fell to 45% if the Town did not to offer any incentives.

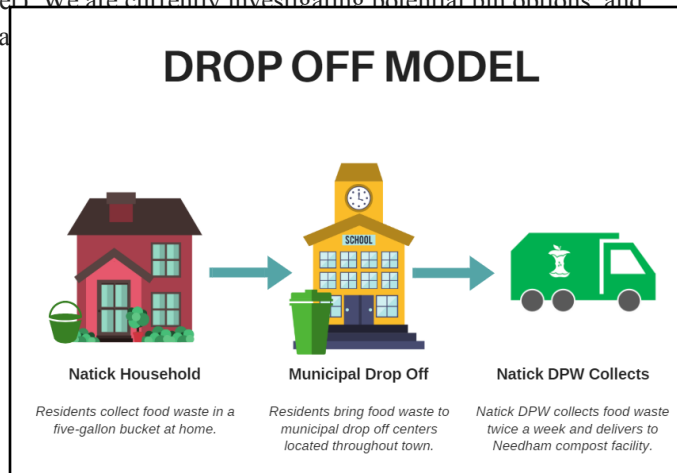
³ Tilly and Salvy's Bacon Street Farm is already offering compostable bags through the existing pilot and has offered to continue. Wegman's has also expressed an interest in participating. The Sustainability Office will reach out to other Natick stores that sell blue Pay-As-You-Throw trash bags to further explore this opportunity in the coming weeks.

As part of the survey, a number of pilot members expressed an interest in a compost drop-off option. Per MassDEP 310 CMR 16 Site Assignment Regulations for Solid Waste Facilities, Natick has the ability to provide a collection center for residents to drop off food materials on municipal property, provided certain conditions are met.

As such, the Town plans to launch a drop-off pilot program later this year with approximately 100 residents at four locations across town. We are in the process of finalizing these locations, but will seek to locate them in different areas of the community to provide convenient and equitable access to all residents (e.g., at the Cole Center, Ben Hem, Community Senior Center and Recycling Center). We are currently investigating potential bin options and have spoken with Boston, Cambridge and Arlington about their programs.

As part of this program, participants will be asked to pay an annual fee and will receive sealable, five-gallon buckets, kitchen containers, compostable bags and a key to unlock. The containers will be “bear safe” and similar to containers used in remote areas at U.S. National Parks. The Recycling Dividends grant program will be used to fund these costs.

The Town of Needham has agreed to allow the Natick DPW to continue our agreement with them to dispose of food waste at their compost facility from the proposed drop off containers at no charge, in exchange for collecting food waste from one of their elementary school’s cafeteria. The Sanitation Division of the Natick DPW has confirmed they can provide this service using existing resources and that it will not impact their ability to perform current responsibilities, such as trash removal at local parks.



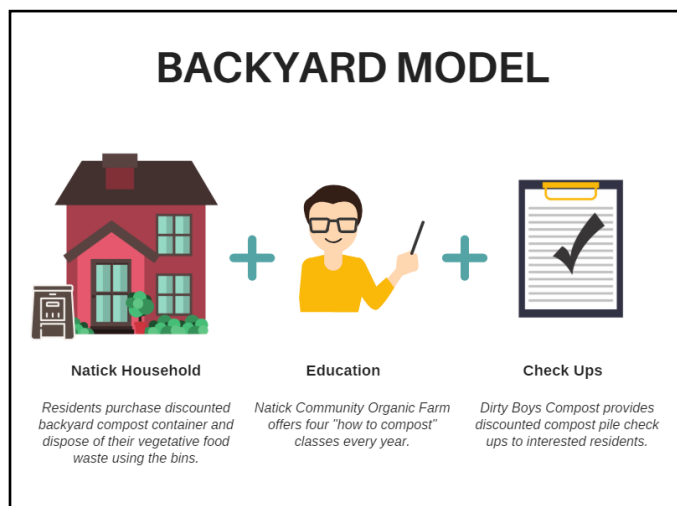
Discounted Containers and Training for Backyard Composting

Overall, pilot members did not respond favorably to a request to switch to backyard composting, citing concerns over animals and the inability to compost meat, fish and dairy products. Many also said they did not have space in their yard to support such an endeavor.

However, the Town realizes this solution would result in the greatest economic and environmental results. As such, we plan to discount the backyard compost containers currently sold at the DPW by \$18 per bin. We will also work with the Natick Community Organic Farm and/or Dirty Boys Composting, to provide residents with four “How to compost” education sessions each year, and provide discounted compost pile “check ups”.

Conclusion

The Town looks forward to supporting residents in their efforts to compost and reduce municipal solid waste. We believe our plan to increase composting by incentivizing curbside, drop-off and backyard composting options will support our long term goals to reduce Natick’s tipping fees and position the Town to take advantage of emerging



solutions and trends in solid waste, such as co-collection and regionalization, that have proven cost savings. We welcome your questions.

Appendix

- Estimated First Year Budget
- Results: June 2018 Survey of Curbside Composting Pilot Members

APPENDIX

Estimated First Year Budget, by Compost Program Offering

**Denotes initial equipment costs*

Item	Cost per Unit	Units	Total Cost	Funding Source (Proposed)
Curbside Program				
Collection service	\$2/week/house hold (estimate)	750 households (estimate)	\$78,000	Natick residents
180 Compostable bags to first 500 sign ups	N/A	90,000	\$0	Existing bag supply and remaining funds from initial pilot
Curbside bin*	\$20	504	\$10,080	MassDEP, Food Waste Cart Grant
Kitchen container*	\$0	500	\$0	Cart vendor to provide for free
Subtotal			\$88,080	
Drop-off Program				
Drop-off containers*	\$1,250	4	\$5,000	MassDEP, Recycling Dividends Grant
Buckets with lid*	\$15	100	\$1,500	Residents
Key copy	\$1.50	100	\$150	Residents
Collection costs	\$1,600/year/site	N/A	\$6,400	This cost would be met using existing resources to collect and haul to Needham in exchange for collection at Hillside School; no tipping fee. Reflects cost of four hours of DPW drive's time and fuel for truck traveling 20 miles at 8 mpg per week. In practice, this may take less time.
Subtotal			\$13,050	
Backyard Program				
Container discount	\$18	100	\$1,800	MassDEP, Recycling Dividends Grant
Compost container (balance)	\$30	100	\$3,000	Natick Residents
Compost education sessions	\$50	4	\$200	MassDEP, Recycling Dividends Grant
Discounted compost pile checkups	\$15	50	\$750	MassDEP, Recycling Dividends Grant
Subtotal			\$5,750	
Total			\$106,880	

Estimated Budget by Funding Source in Year 1 (November 2018 - October 2019)

Funding Source	Cost	Items
Residents	\$82,650	Curbside collection, drop-off buckets/keys, backyard compost bins
Natick DPW	\$6,400	Staff and fuel costs for drop-off hauling and disposal
MassDEP, Recycling Dividends Program	\$7,750	Drop off containers, discount on backyard bins and backyard compost education
MassDEP, Wheeled Food Cart Grant	\$10,080	Curbside composting carts (500)
Total	\$106,880	

Results: June 2018 Survey of Curbside Composting Pilot Members

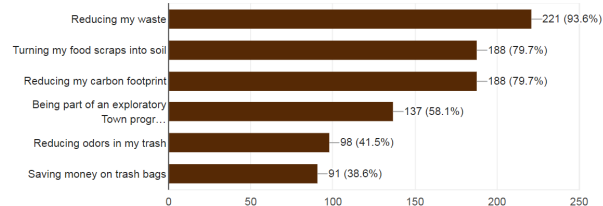
The following charts depict responses to a June 2018 survey that was issued to the 500 residents participating in Natick's curbside composting pilot. Of those who received a link to the survey, 236 responded.

Detailed responses and additional charts summarizing the survey results can be found at:

<http://bit.ly/CompostSurveyResults>. Please note, the 1-5 rating system values 1 as "not important" or "very unlikely" and 5 as "very important" or "very likely".

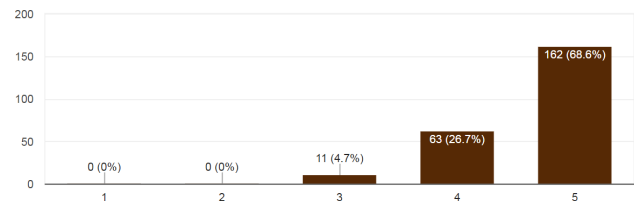
What aspects of the current curbside composting pilot have been especially meaningful to you? Select all that apply.

236 responses



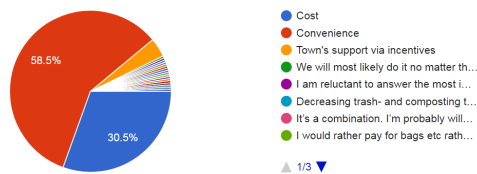
How important is composting/diverting food waste from trash to you?

236 responses



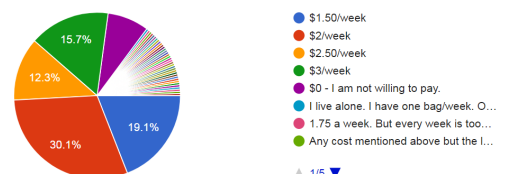
What factor is MOST important to you as you evaluate your participation in future curbside composting options?

236 responses



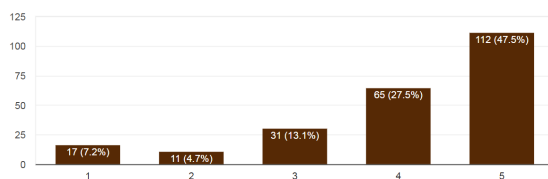
How much are you willing to pay for a curbside composting subscription?

236 responses



How likely are you to sign up for a curbside composting subscription service as described?

236 responses



Are you interested in transitioning from curbside composting to backyard composting?

236 responses

If the Town did not offer any incentives, how likely would you be to sign up for a curbside composting subscription service?

236 responses

