



City of Malden

Malden City Hall
215 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Meeting Minutes - Final Finance Committee

Councillor McDonald, Chair
Councillor Condon, Vice-Chair
Councillor Colon-Hayes
Councillor Spadafora
Councillor Taylor
Councillor Winslow

Tuesday, October 29, 2024

5:30 PM

City Hall, Room #105
215 Pleasant Street

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

[https://cityofmalden.zoom.us/j/98640838575?](https://cityofmalden.zoom.us/j/98640838575?pwd=2ISEC3A_VoObIhXfa7Z6CY5ZC8SBfQ.tejQV6WI9QZffurL)

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Roll Call

Present: 6 - Councillor Carey McDonald, Councillor Paul Condon, Karen Colon Hayes, Craig Spadafora, Ari Taylor and Stephen Winslow

Also Present: Councillors Crowe, Linehan, O'Malley

Maria Luise-Mayor's Office

Alicia McNeil-City Solicitor

Christopher Mooney-Assist City Solicitor

Dan Grover-Treasurer

Charles Ranaghan-Controller

Ron Cochran-Mass DEP

Councillor McDonald called the meeting to order at 5:34 PM. This meeting was recorded on zoom.

Minutes to be Approved

[394-24](#)

Minutes of June 11, 2024 to be approved.

A motion was made by Councillor Colon Hayes, seconded by Councillor Winslow,

that the Committee Minutes of June 11, 2024 be approved. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Business

The Finance Committee will meet with Dan Grover, Treasurer to revisit trash fees in the City.

Councillor McDonald asked Dan Grover, Treasurer to give an overview of where we have been in the last couple of years and some of the dynamics feeding these trash income and expense figures.

Dan explained we have the last three actual expenses for bags and stickers relatively smooth. He goes over the handout attached. He said there was a little bit of a variable in 2023 we could only anticipate increase expenses year over year. We have a contract for trash removal till 2031 were good there but once that contract is up for renewal we can anticipate a two fold increase if not higher from what we have been hearing with the feedback from other communities as well. We are looking for a significant cost that are far away any revenue that we are collecting. There is no real way to generate more trash sticker revenue. Pretty much everyone who is going to buy one is buying them. There is not more people to generate more revenue to offset any additional costs, if someone buys another barrel or sticker the cost of trash will outweigh that revenue. If people don't buy bags we could buy more stickers but ultimately we don't see an increase in revenue outside of an increase in the cost of bags or stickers that we sell to people. We're looking at relatively flat revenue sources with ever increasing expenses. We are in a hole and are we are looking at getting much deeper soon.

Councillor McDonald had some clarifying questions and said we see a pretty flat income which was part of the goal for the sticker program to be cost neutral for residents correct. Dan said that was the idea.

Councillor McDonald asked on the cost expense side and sees pretty similar contract fees. Then there is a jump in 2021-22 which was a \$5,000 jump. Chuck explained when we rolled out the barrels, there was an amendment to the contract because JRM at the time now Republic felt that they were requiring their employees to lift bigger barrels as opposed to smaller open air recycling bin which added a little bit of cost to the yearly contract.

Councillor Winslow said as we see the deficits in the three years running of the program we see we are spending more of the City money on trash. At that time we decided to put the program into effect the Council said let's revisit it and look at the figures. Councillor McDonald said perhaps that is why we are revisiting it

Councillor Linehan said her recollection was we went with the smaller bins because the State was offsetting the cost of it to the tune of \$500,000 but she is now hearing because we do not have the bigger bins we are now paying essentially the same amount of money in the contract because it is causing manual labor and has wiped out that savings. Is there any reason why we couldn't reconsider the larger bin? If we are not going to net any savings from that we may lose that incentive from the state but maybe we could get it to a more reasonable amount.

Chuck answered by saying back when there were public hearings Councillor DeMaria at the time spearheaded public engagement towards rolling out this new program, there were a couple of reasons why we went with the smaller bins. One was the grant through the DEP at the time wanted the smaller barrels and two the residents were saying they had no place to store the bigger barrels. That was the internal debate we had.

Councillor Winslow said his understanding from Ron Hogan at the time is the bigger barrels were not cheaper and did not save labor. Having humans take the trash and putting it into the truck was less labor intensive than having the truck.

Councillor Linehan asked for clarity on the bags. She understands for flexibility we went with the bags as another option. We have to pull compliance because we still have people still putting them on the street and on top of the barrel to not buy another sticker. Do we have to continue offering the bags is that a route we would want to consider? Instead of the bags they would have to buy another sticker.

Councillor McDonald said we are making more on the bags than the stickers right now.

Councillor O'Malley explained that JRM at the time they said this would be more labor for them. Have you seen tonnage go up since implementing this program?

Dan said he does not get reports on tonnage, but the cost are going up from 2019 to 2024. He does not anticipate or see any decrease in tonnage. It is either recycling or trash. We don't see lot's of people composting.

Councillor O'Malley is trying to figure out is actually more pushing people to the stickers going to have the opposite effect because they can throw away as much as they want.

Councillor McDonald asked if we could get data on the amount of tonnage?

Chuck said DPW gets reports of that and he will get that for the Council.

Ron Cochran mentioned that the information on the numbers and other information of reviewing other cities is available at Mass DEP. You also have a Municipal Assistance Coordinator, Brian Walsh who is the liaison between the City and Malden. He said when talking about an enterprise fund Malden is not officially in one however, cities he has seen who have done one is basically deciding on a percentage that will come from the City Budget and Variable Revenues and basically doing a math calculation on that then reviewing it annually. It is very much like the water bill. When the program was changed in Malden a lot of feedback came through about tying it to the landlord and that would be as burden on the landlord for two reasons: the landlord has the inability to stress upon the tenant how much trash to throw away. Secondly when you talk about revenues you lose the ability to keep things unit based. Some other communities are looking to raise the unit base fees so that it is directly tied. The bags have been the same price since 2008.

Councillor McDonald said the price of the bags is a red flag by not raising the price for 16 years.

Councillor McDonald asked if DEP has any studies if composting programs effect the amount of waste that people are producing?

Ron said yes huge effect. The program that is being pushed is the food waste.

Councillor O'Malley asked if they could confirm that trash does not have to go out for public bidding?

Dan said correct. We could look into co-procurement. If there are similar communities with similar expiration dates with their contracts and maybe we could get a bigger contract and go together with another community. Maybe looking at what communities that have a public bidding process and maybe they are getting better pricing.

Ron said yes it is advantageous to go out to bid. Some folks use the laws of the bidding process to your advantage to get good bids. But ultimately you don't have to bid you can go for the bid exemption. DEP offers a working group to help municipalities that are about to be up on their contract to understand this stuff. A representative would sit in on

meetings and help for that. The other issue of having cities and towns combine efforts Ron mentioned Newton and Brookline recently went out for a mutual RFP and they got good beneficial stuff and went a la carte on their services where they could have multiple vendors for different things. He thinks its and advantage to look at those things.

Councillor McDonald reviewed the things the committee talked about wanting to follow up on and asked Chuck if would forward the trash and tonnage figures for the past few years and also the detailed survey of municipal trash data. He asked Ron if they have case studies on the composting program and if it has lead to any meaningful diversion and feels that would be helpful as well. Councillor McDonald said once we review these things we can reconvene in a few weeks and confirmed with Dan we have already passed the deadline for the January 2025 changes, noting any potential changes we talk about would not be able to take effect prior till January 2026.

We can continue the conversation in a couple of weeks about what options we might want to put on the table.

Other Business

Adjournment

Motion was made by Councillor Winslow, seconded by Councillor Taylor, that this meeting be adjourned at 6:14 PM. The motion carried unanimously.