

A
GREENER
BOONSBORO

First Annual Report

Boonsboro Recycling Task Force

Written by Rosemary James
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BOONSBORO RECYCLING TASK FORCE

August 1, 2007 – July 31, 2008

Janeen Solberg – Chairperson
Susan Jakupciak
Rosemary James
Amy Jones
Kim Moss
Jenny Sarnecki
Brigitte Schmidt
Laura Schnackenberg
Kathy Vesely
Barbara Wetzel
Kevin Chambers – Council Liaison
Debra Smith – Town Manager
Harvey Hoch – Washington County Recycling Coordinator

BOONSBORO MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Charles F. Kauffman, Jr. – Mayor
Howard W. Long – Assistant Mayor
Richard E. Hawkins, Sr. – Treasurer
Kevin M. Chambers – Council Member
Natalie J. Mose – Council Member
Mervin Frank Nuice – Council Member
Barbara B. Wetzel – Council Member

WASHINGTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

John F. Barr – President
Terry L. Baker – Vice-President
Kristin B. Aleshire – Commissioner
James F. Kercheval – Commissioner
William J. Wivell – Commissioner

Introduction

In August 2007, several concerned and dedicated citizens came together to problem-solve an unfortunate occurrence; the loss of the Boonsboro Recycling Bin. The group was made up of Boonsboro residents, a Town Council Member, the Town Manager and the Washington County Recycling Coordinator. Since then, their efforts have led to the return of the Recycling Bin to the community and to much more.

The resulting energy generated by the formation of this Task Force has resulted in a clear mission:

To promote recycling and conservation efforts within the Boonsboro Community through service and education.

This document provides a history of the Boonsboro Recycling Task Force along with the first year's activities and accomplishments. In addition, the committee's vision and recommendations for the future are included.

History of the Boonsboro Recycling Task Force

In the summer of 2007, the Boonsboro Recycling Task Force (BRTF) was born out of dismay over the removal of the recycling facility from the community. The Boonsboro Mayor and Council voted in July 2007 to remove the only recycling bin in the town because the site behind the Gesac building on Orchard Avenue was being used as a dumping ground for everything from sofas to computers.

As a result, Councilman Kevin Chambers, along with Town Manager Debra Smith, assisted in organizing a committee to find a new site for the recycling bin and to find a better solution to the problem. The BRTF was then formed with Boonsboro resident Janeen Solberg as the Task Force chair.

On August 15, 2007, the BRTF had its first official meeting. At that meeting, task force members expressed disappointment over the loss of the recycling facility, concern over having to drive a long distance to recycle and frustration that a few irresponsible citizens ruined the facility for everyone else. They agreed that they were opposed to dumping recyclables in the landfill, wanted to set a good example and desired to make recycling convenient for the residents. Out of that initial meeting came two goals (*Attachment A*):

1. Short-term: Bring the recycling bin back to Boonsboro
2. Long-term: Establish curbside recycling

Activities and Accomplishments

During the remaining months of 2007 to the present, the Task Force, an action-oriented group, has moved toward accomplishing its goals. Additionally, Task Force members have endeavored to improve the environment and to further educate both adults and children in taking positive steps towards a greener Boonsboro.

1. Return of the Bin

After much discussion and several appeals to local businesses, a decision was made and approved by the Boonsboro Mayor and Council to place a recycling bin at the State's Park 'n' Ride facility at the intersection of South Main Street (old U.S. 40) and MD 67. The bin was in place on December 20, 2007.

It is through vigilant monitoring of the bin by the BRTF that the area has remained clean and safe for recyclers. Each day of the week, the bin is visited by a member of the BRTF. When it is observed that the bin is at least 80 percent full, a call is placed to the county's Solid Waste Department, which contacts Allied Waste Company to schedule a service call to empty the bin as soon as possible. Through the dedication of Task Force members and the unfailing support of Harvey Hoch, the Washington County Recycling Coordinator, our community has been spared the burden of an unsightly and unsafe recycling area (*Attachment B*).

2. Community Recycling Survey

At the first meeting of the BRTF, it was decided that it would be prudent to survey the residents of Boonsboro as to the issue of recycling. The Mayor and Council reported that a short survey was mailed to residents along with their utility bills in 1995. There was minimal response to that survey. Councilman Kevin Chambers, liaison to the BRTF, advised the committee that responses from 30 percent of the town's households would provide an accurate measure of the town's recycling needs.

Task Force member Barbara Wetzel, with the support of other Task Force members, created a survey (*Attachments C and D*) that would be conducted door-to-door in the nine neighborhoods that comprise the entire community of Boonsboro. The Mayor and Council approved the survey before canvassing of the neighborhoods began. Task Force members individually or in pairs surveyed all nine neighborhoods. The November 2007 minutes of the Boonsboro Mayor and Council meeting state that "a door-to-door community recycling survey will be used for consideration of the curbside recycling quotes".

The survey results were presented to the Mayor and Council at their February 2008 meeting. The results, reflecting a 41 percent participation rate, with responses from all nine neighborhoods, showed that 86.1 percent of those surveyed wanted curbside recycling. Eighty-five percent of those surveyed who do not currently recycle responded that they would recycle if curbside recycling were available even if it meant a higher trash pick-up fee. This statistic indicates that curbside recycling would significantly increase the amount of recycled materials in Boonsboro and

consequently would reduce the amount of non-recyclables put out for trash pick-up service. (*Attachments E, F, G and H*)

However, the Boonsboro Mayor and Council have publicly stated that they do not want to pass any recycling cost on to residents. They have reported receiving calls and comments from those saying they oppose curbside recycling. The majority of Mayor and Council members have stated that curbside recycling should be the responsibility of the county government. County Commissioner Kristin Aleshire, present at the February 2008 Mayor and Council meeting, said it was possible the county could help fund a recycling program for Boonsboro. (*Attachment I*) Unfortunately, it appears that at this time there will be no financial support from the county now that a study is underway to determine future plans for solid waste disposal in Washington County. It should be noted that the BRTF contends that any responsible waste disposal plan would include a curbside recycling component as supported by the Survey.

3. Recycling in the Boonsboro Schools

Task Force member Kathy Vesely, a staff member at Boonsboro High School, is credited with the re-establishment of recycling at the school. Veteran educators recalled that there was a recycling program at the school several years ago, but habits became lax, and there had been little evidence of recycling in recent years. Kathy, with the approval of Principal Martin Green and the Student Council, started an Environmental Club at the high school. Blue recycling bins were placed in all classrooms, offices and the cafeteria. Laminated signs on the bins help clarify just what can be recycled. Students can obtain credit for Service Learning Hours by meeting Kathy each Tuesday to collect bins and taking the materials to the recycling dumpsters located on school grounds. The first collection was March 1, 2008, and by the end of the school year, 6,449 pounds of paper, 243 pounds of plastic bottles and aluminum cans, along with 69 inkjet cartridges and 24 cell phones, had been recycled at the high school.

Recycling programs in Boonsboro Middle and Elementary schools are planned for the 2008-2009 school years. Task Force members Laura Schnackenberg, Jenny Sarnecki, Amy Jones and Janeen Solberg will work on these programs. The high school model will be useful in this effort.

4. April Tour of the 40 West Landfill

Harvey Hoch invited the Mayor, Council Members, and the BRTF to tour the 40 West Landfill. On Saturday, April 12, 2008, the BRTF, along with Council member Frank Nuice and other interested citizens, toured the Landfill with Harvey as tour guide. This eye-opening experience furthered the Task Force's resolve to achieve its goals. Those on this tour will not soon forget the enormity of the land excavation, the eeriness of the white plastic bags suspended in the surrounding trees, or the huge amounts of recyclables that were *not* being recycled but dumped instead into the landfill. These vivid images have made a lasting impression.

On a positive note, however, the increase in recycling in Boonsboro has resulted in a decrease in trash tonnage as evidenced in *Attachment H*.

5. Expanding Recycling in Boonsboro

The past year has seen the implementation of recycling at many community events and in several community buildings.

At the recommendation of Council Member Ray Grove, the South County Little League facility along Monroe Road introduced recycling bins during the 2008 season. Little Leaguers, their parents, families and friends have adopted the habit of recycling whenever possible while snacking at the games. BRTF Chair Janeen Solberg, along with her family and other Little League parents, has coordinated this effort.

Some town events where recycling bins are appearing or will appear are the Fishing Derby, the Boonsboro Independence Day Celebration, National Night Out and Boonesborough Days in September. Councilman Frank Nuice has worked tirelessly with Task Force members in seeing that recycling bins are available during the events and materials are collected and recycled at the end of each event.

In addition, some BRTF members have implemented recycling and raised environmental awareness in local churches. Trinity Lutheran and St. James Roman Catholic Church have switched from Styrofoam to ceramic mugs for coffee. Recycling bins also are in place in those churches.

When the Boonsboro Free Public Library moved from its location next to Town Hall on North Main Street to the new facility on Potomac Street, recycling opportunities abounded. Through the efforts of Janeen Solberg, who also serves as the president of the Boonsboro Library Board, Head Librarian Chris Hawkins and the entire library staff, materials are being discarded through recycling whenever possible. Council member Richard Hawkins has made countless trips to the recycling bin with outdated publications and office paper.

Many local merchants have gone "greener." The staff at Turn-the-Page Bookstore, in downtown Boonsboro, has made that business a model of responsible recycling. Weis Market, on Chase Six Boulevard, sells green canvas reusable grocery bags and offers a three-cent per bag rebate when customers provide their own bags. In addition, more environmentally-friendly products are appearing in the store, the only supermarket in South County.

6. Publication Planned for Distribution to Residents

A recycling informational flier has been created by the Task Force for distribution in September 2008. The printing of the two-sided, 8 ½ by 11 flier is being sponsored by Susquehanna Bank, which has a branch office in Boonsboro. All 1,200 Boonsboro Municipal Utilities Commission customers will receive the flier in their utility bills, which will be mailed in early September. The flier will also be available in various locations throughout the town. It contains information pertaining to recycling locations, guidelines for recyclers and ways to help save the environment.

The Boonsboro Recycling Task Force Looks Ahead

As the BRTF moves into its second year, there is much more to be done. Future plans include:

- Continuing to implement recycling in the schools and foster a respect for the environment among our young citizens.
- Touring a recycling facility, such as Recycle America in Howard County.
- Continuing to encourage citizens to recycle.
- Initiating a weekly column in the *Herald-Mail* for the purpose of providing readers with environmental tips. Look for this column in the Home Source section of the Saturday edition. The writer is Leif E. Green (a.k.a. Kathy Vesely).
- Encouraging local markets and other businesses to switch to more environmentally-friendly packaging.
- Continuing to have at least one BRTF member in attendance at the monthly County Solid Waste Advisory Committee Meeting.
- Continuing to pursue curbside recycling for all Boonsboro residents.

Final Message

As the first year of the BRTF draws to a close, a sense of civic pride and satisfaction is evident. A true team effort has resulted in the betterment of the Boonsboro Community. Citizens, along with the Mayor and Council, Boonsboro Town Manager, County Commissioners, the Washington County Recycling Coordinator and the staff of the Solid Waste Department, have come together to share ideas, problem-solve, and move forward on environmental issues and challenges.

Perhaps the following quote best reflects the essence of the BRTF:

The ultimate test of a man's conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard.

— Gaylord Nelson