

## **NNth17th ARTICLE**

*Submitted by: Paul Hsieh and Douglas Plante*

### **Resolution Regarding the Establishment of a Town-wide Composting Program**

TO SEE IF THE TOWN WILL ADOPT THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION:

WHEREAS, the Town of Brookline Department of Public Works (DPW) and Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) have initiated a Zero Waste planning process because of the critical role reducing waste and increasing recycling and composting has in responding to climate change and environmental damage,

WHEREAS, trash incineration generates large quantities of Greenhouse gases that contribute to global climate change and large quantities of toxic residue which impose an unfair burden to the communities that site the incinerators,

WHEREAS, composting is environmentally beneficial and results in soil-enriching compost that can be used by communities and farms,

WHEREAS, food waste and other compostable organic waste comprises 25-40% of Brookline's waste that is currently incinerated,

WHEREAS, Brookline currently requires composting of yard waste, and residential composting of all compostable waste has successfully been implemented in 10% of Brookline households and up to 40% of households in other Massachusetts communities,

THEREFORE, be it resolved that Town Meeting urges ~~SWAC~~the Moderator to appoint a special committee to research options and propose a plan to expand the Town's ~~mandatory~~recycling program to include all compostable organic waste generated by residents serviced by the Town's municipal waste collection program and to identify any necessary changes to bylaws, rules, and regulations needed to start implementation,

Be it further resolved, that Town Meeting urges ~~SWAC to submit a progress report at the May 2022 Town Meeting and the final report at the November, 2022 Town Meeting,~~

~~Be it further resolved that Town Meeting urges DPW to implement the program recommended by SWAC as soon as feasible~~the special committee to include cost estimates for all proposed plans included in the final report,

~~Be it further resolved that Town Meeting urges the special committee to submit a progress report at the May 2022 Town Meeting and the final report at the November, 2022 Town Meeting,~~

Or act on anything relative thereto.

## PETITIONER'S ARTICLE DESCRIPTION

Like many in this town, we have long heard that this country has an impending waste management crisis. Everyone above a certain age will remember the saga of the Long Island "Garbage Barge." More recently, we are learning how different strategies in waste management interact with global climate change. Yet, it has been hard to believe that an individual or a town could do anything more than make a symbolic gesture.

Therefore, we were excited to read the draft of the "Town of Brookline Zero Waste Framework" prepared by DPW and SWAC. We felt proud that our town was preparing to join cities around the world in pledging to reduce use of landfill and incineration by 50% by 2030. The framework and the concrete steps it outlined gave us hope that we can and will take meaningful action.

Reading the Framework more carefully we couldn't help but notice Composting. We learn that:

- Composting practices are well understood,
- Composting does not result in any toxic or environmentally damaging products, only compost which can be used to fertilize and improve soil,
- A significant fraction of Brookline's waste stream is compostable organic matter. The town's incineration contractor, Covanta SEMASS, estimates that about 25% of the waste they receive could have been composted. Cambridge estimates that 40% of their waste could be composted. Cornell School of Agriculture estimates upwards of 70% of household waste is compostable,
- Composting is practical. Brookline composts all yard waste, and 10% of the households segregate compostable waste and *pay* to have it composted,
- Composting is the most efficient form of recycling. All compostable waste is converted to usable compost.

~~We are asking the Town to make a real commitment to the "Zero Waste" pledge. We are asking SWAC to reduce its timeline for developing a town-wide composting plan to one year. When it comes to composting, our town possesses practical experience, community interest, proven technology, and data that such a plan will get us at least half way to our goal. We can reach our goals by 2030 and we should take our first steps~~Moderator to appoint a committee, which includes the co-petitioners, to research the options and propose a plan for implementing a town wide residential composting program that has the potential to start sooner than 2027, which is the proposed date for implementation under the current draft Zero Waste framework. We are recommending this course of action because DPW and SWAC have made us aware that they have severe resource limitations that will prevent them from moving forward at an earlier date. When it comes to composting, our town possesses practical experience, community interest, proven

technology, and data that such a plan will get us at least half way to our goal. We can reach our goals by 2030 and we should take our first steps now.

For every year that implementation is delayed, 3000 tons of carbon dioxide plus additional environmental toxins such as methane, carbon monoxide, and particulate matter will be released into the atmosphere. The Town will realize savings from a reduction in greenhouse gases, toxins, incinerator tipping fees, decreased sewer rates, and potential changes in staffing. The exact dollar amount of these benefits cannot be ascertained without research, which we think is important to do now.

Thank you.