

BANNING COMMERCIAL FOOD WASTE

Recently the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) proposed a disposal ban on commercial food waste effective in July 2014. This would prohibit commercial and institutional generators of food waste from sending their waste for disposal at a landfill or incinerator. Waste bans have been a tool used by DEP for over twenty years to divert usable materials to a higher and better use. For example, one of the early bans was on yard waste which has stimulated the growth of composting.

The DEP has now targeted food waste as the next waste ban item to encourage more composting and development of renewable energy facilities. In order to facilitate development of facilities to process the material and to allow time for communities to address collection methods, DEP is first focusing the waste ban on operations that generate more than one ton of food waste per week. Of course, communities that are already separating food waste will be ahead of the curve and can take advantage of new options for management of this wastestream as they become available. Options may include sending the waste to an anaerobic digestion facility, a composting operation or an animal-feed business. The state has supported this initiative with low-interest loans to private companies and grants to public entities to build anaerobic digesters, with the first grant going to MWRA. For more information, visit the DEP website at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/pr-2013/commercial-food-waste-ban.html>

Here in Bourne, the Department of Integrated Solid Waste Management (ISWM) in conjunction with the Town Administrator is currently in negotiations with Harvest Power, Inc. which plans to lease approximately 4.5 acres of land at the ISWM facility off of Route 28 where it would build an anaerobic digester. ISWM currently operates the landfill and the residential recycling center among other activities. Operating under a 25-year lease, the facility would digest food waste and other organic matter in the absence of oxygen within an enclosed vessel to produce biogas which is essentially methane. This gas would then be combined with our landfill gas, also mostly methane and be used as a fuel for engines that would produce energy on-site in a power plant. Residual solids could then be turned into a rich fertilizer. However, before any facility is built or becomes operational, substantial permitting and engineering will have to be done including modifying the site assignment at ISWM which is overseen by the Bourne Board of Health in a public hearing.

This effort is part of the larger evaluation of the operations of ISWM that has been undertaken over the last several years by the ISWM Landfill Business Model Working Group (Working Group) which is comprised of representatives from the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Health, the Finance Committee, the Capital Outlay Committee and Energy Advisory Committee. The Working Group meets with ISWM staff, its consultant and the Town Administrator to ensure that Bourne is planning for the future. More information can be found at Townofbourne.com and then go the ISWM Department website.