

What's Your New Normal? Community Forum on Trash & Recycling in MA (Related to COVID-19)

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

June 16, 2020

10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Meeting Summary

Janice Paré (MassDEP): Welcome and Introductions

- Encourages discussion and conversation in this forum
- Webinar brought to you by MassDEP, with facilitation by Rachel Smith (polls, chat, open discussion)
- Webinar recording will be made available
- This is a new format for us, please raise hand, use chat box, participate in the discussion
- Mix of speakers, polls, and open discussion
- Presentations will be made by John Fischer, Rick McLean, and Charlotte Milan

Poll:

1 of 14. 1. How is your trash and recycling collected?

35 of 65 Attendees responded

Multiple choice with single answer

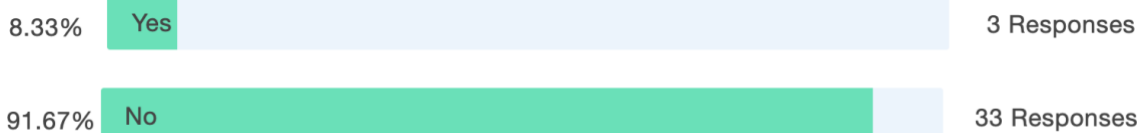


Poll:

2 of 14. 2. Are you having trouble accessing PPE?

36 of 65 Attendees responded

Multiple choice with single answer



Presentation: John Fischer, Deputy Division Director for Solid Waste, BAW

(Starts at minute 5:50 in recording.)

Updates on two issues:

- Redemption Centers
 - In March, the state suspended enforcement of the requirement for retailers to take back bottles for redemption
 - On June 5, enforcement has been reinstated for retailers that use Reverse Vending Machines (RVM)
 - On June 19, enforcement will be reinstated for all retailers, including those who use RVMs as well as over the counter
 - After hearing complaints when redemption centers stopped taking containers, the transition back to accepting redemption containers is going relatively smoothly so far
 - Reports from TOMRA indicate that stores are coming back online and they see an uptick in the quantity of containers coming in. Safety requirements are in place.
- Plastic Bag Recycling
 - Local plastic bag bans were suspended which resulted in a big increase in plastic bag use
 - This was never a state requirement to stop taking plastic bags for recycling, it was voluntary by the retailers
 - DEP is reaching out to retailers and has learned the following about corporate policies and individual store practices (*which don't always align*):
 - Shaw's/Star Market: Re-opening today for plastic bag takeback (some individual stores never stopped taking)
 - Whole Foods is working on the plan to re-open
 - Stop & Shop: No feedback on company policy, but one store reports that they are accepting bags
 - Roche Bros: Not taking plastic bags at this time
 - Lowe's: Company policy says they accept bags but one store found that isn't taking them
 - Hannaford's and Big Y: They never stopped taking plastic bags
 - Market Basket: No word yet but one store is taking bags
 - DEP is working on a coherent update that is forthcoming and will be promoted via Recycle Smart MA and social media
- COVID 19 and Impact on SW and Recycling
 - DEP took guidance from national organizations/agencies, especially: OSHA and CDC
 - Worked to address health and safety needs
 - Links provided by MassDEP:
 - [National Waste & Recycling Association: COVID-19 FAQ](#)
 - [Solid Waste Association of North America: Guidance on COVID-19](#)
 - [U.S. Occupational Safety & Health Administration: COVID-19 Control & Prevention](#)
 - [U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention: What Waste Collectors & Recyclers Need to Know About COVID-19](#)

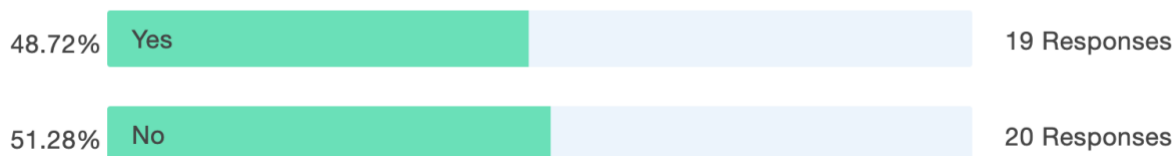
Janice Paré: Poll results are for DEP Commissioner Marty Suuberg and will be made available to all on the webinar/forum.

Poll:

3 of 14. 3. Is your municipality experiencing cost increases for solid waste or recycling services due to COVID?

39 of 65 Attendees responded

Multiple choice with single answer

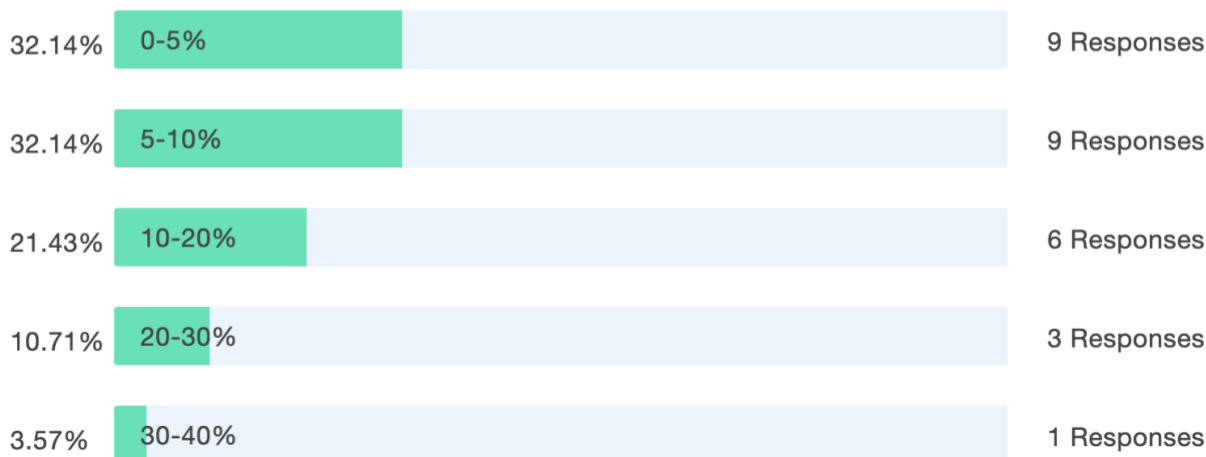


Poll:

4 of 14. 4. Has your muni experienced a substantial (5% +) change in trash tonnage since March?

28 of 65 Attendees responded

Multiple choice with single answer

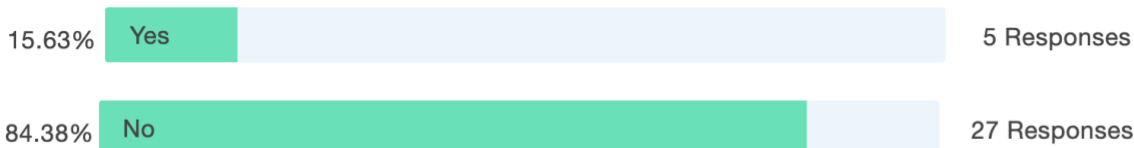


Poll:

5 of 14. 5. Have your collection and/or transportation costs increased as a result?

32 of 65 Attendees responded

Multiple choice with single answer



Write in comments related to costs:

- Andover: Paid a Covid-related expense for extra trucks/labor to deal with high volumes. Lasted less than anticipated, no changes to service (YW, bulky, solid waste.) Hauler – Republic Services

Presentation: Rick McKean, Transfer Station Foreman, Town of Orleans Transfer Station

(Starts at minute 16:48 in recording.)

- Pictures of transfer station (TS) with social distancing queues
- Wanted to keep normalcy, routine as much as possible
- Older population in the community
- Trips to the TS and Gift House are a part of their community life
- Gift House closed week of March 15. Drop-off of items in too close proximity would be a problem/risk.
- The following weekend they stopped accepting cash. They have a credit card machine mounted on the guard shack and the resident swipes directly.
- Challenge with social distancing at first. They used barricades to make rows to collection containers, using tape on the ground (marking distance to stand apart) and cones
- Some initial confusion and graffiti on signs and barricades
- Arrows placed on ground and at eye level to indicate direction of movement, entrance and exit
- Signage indicating what to do, wait in line, social distance prompts
- Parking issues led to added stripes on the ground and signs, borrowed with heavy base, worked well
- Credit card machine was covered with plexiglass hood to make weather resistant
- Closed the C&D container because of bad behavior when people didn't want to wait (this was recently re-opened)
- Container for small metal items was added but found 4 engine blocks inside
- Also a few fender benders occurred
- Signage posted to keep social distance and no picking/scavenging
- Gift House items were sometimes left outside
- Currently, they have separate lines for residential and commercial trash, "do not enter" signs, cones in use, marked entrances and exits, and most residents following the rules
- Lessons learned:
 - Change can be confusing
 - Reassure residents, be kind and helpful
 - Don't take negative comments personally
 - Slowing down the operation has allowed for more observations and education on how to recycle correctly (Recycling IQ Kit grantee -- people like this)
 - Maintain normalcy and as many services as possible, done safely
- Staff changes? Yes, the DPW reduced to 3-day work week. They have gotten some highway staff support.
- They have PPE, they clean surfaces daily, and hand sanitizer is available
- No mask requirement for residents but yes for staff. They are following social distancing protocol from the Governor's guidelines. Most people use masks, but over time fewer people think it is necessary (summer visitors, out of state).
- Increase in contamination? Yes, especially in cardboard container. They are seeing more chip board and paperboard getting mixed into OCC (recent loads were downgraded to mixed paper). They applied for a grant to keep separated to maximize material value. Plastic is seeing similar amounts of contamination as always.
- HHW collection in May was postponed, another date planned in September. In the meantime, they collect items with Freon, TVs, e-waste, gas, oil, mercury, as well as brush and YW
- Expect onslaught of mattresses, demo, sofa beds- it's already starting

Q from Ed Gilbert: What are people doing about HHW?

A: Devens will re-open in June and events on Cape Cod will resume after a brief suspension

Comment on contamination from Newburyport: They also see increase in OCC contamination, staff keeping an eye on this

Comments on HHW:

- Northern Berkshires have HHW events starting in August
- Tessa David (Devens)
 - 12 munis served
 - Groton is a lot like Orleans, wanting to retain normalcy as much as possible. True for most of the transfer stations and drop-offs in her group
 - Paid operations discontinued (bulky waste, metal, e-waste), all else stayed the same
 - They use barriers and one-way traffic
 - They don't expect an onslaught of waste, but will load out more frequently if needed
 - HHW events held at Devens in March then June (cancelled April and May). People followed signs and rules (items in back of vehicle, accessible to staff, keep windows closed). Provided [link](#) to website with rules- requirements for attendees and items presented. Kept brief and clear and people must wear masks.
- Andover required pre-registration using Sign-Up Genius to space out attendees. Minuteman facility did the same.
- Northern Berkshire SWMD kept going, and paper shredding went OK as well
- Brookline's HHW drop-off opens July 7, masks are a must, no exiting vehicles, and items must be in the trunk. Shared [link](#) to rules.
- For proof of residency, hold driver's license or utility bill up to window for review

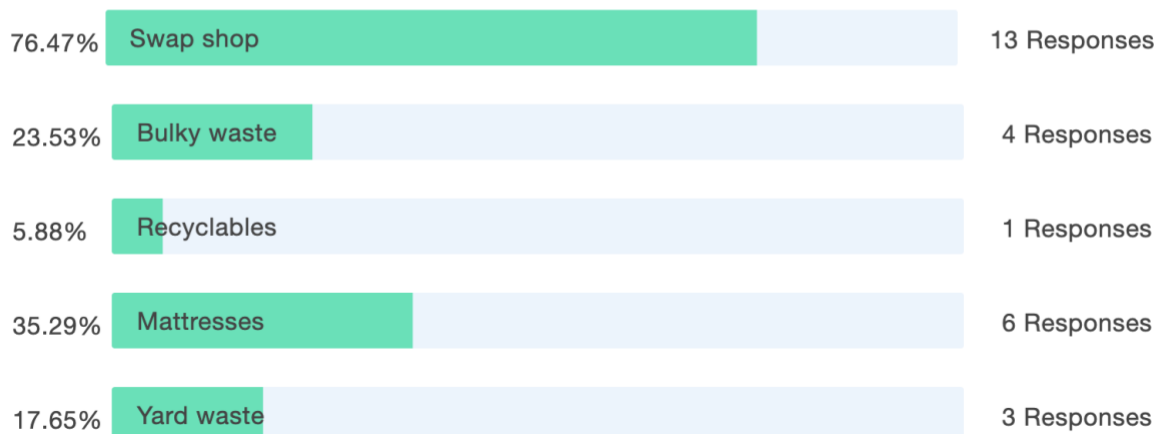
Write in comments related to HHW:

- Brookline: Haz mat drop-off will start collection July 7 weekly under restrictions. Masks, material in trunks no residents out of vehicle. Supervisor has right to not service residents who do not follow rules.
- Andover: Had HHW collection 6/13, did pre-registration via sign-up-genius (first time), went pretty well since they were spaced out which they usually are not.
- NBSWMD: HHW collections event Aug 22 Scheduled.
- HHW collection days are going forward on Cape Cod after a brief suspension. The HHW collections on the Cape will all have a police detail because of people not staying in their cars and sometimes being disruptive.
- Devens Regional HHW opened beginning of June

Poll:

6 of 14. 6. Have you suspended or altered your collections of any of the following items at your TS? Check all that apply. 17 of 65 Attendees responded

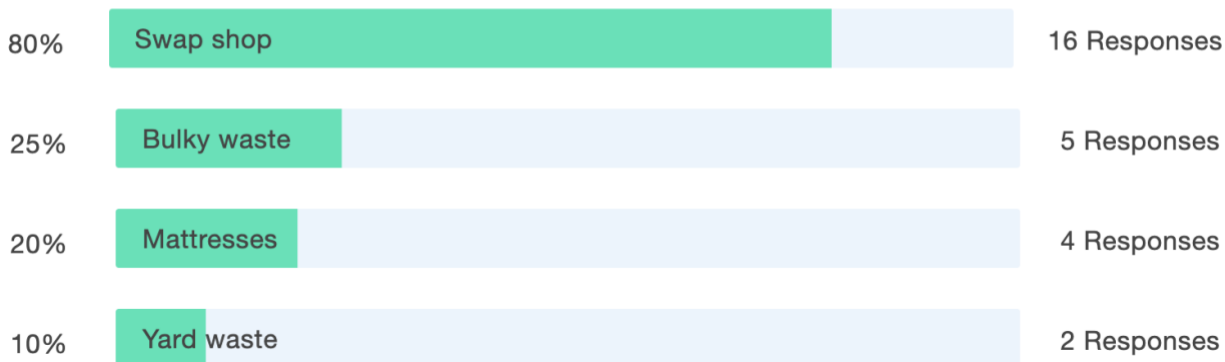
Multiple choice with multiple answers



Poll:

7 of 14. 7. Which TS programs that were suspended have not reopened? Check all that apply. 20 of 65 Attendees responded

Multiple choice with multiple answers



Write in comments related to transfer station discussion:

- Winchester: We are seeing a large increase at our yard waste drop off.
- Sandwich: In order to address the yard waste onslaught, we had a "Yard Waste Disposal Only" day on our normally closed day. This spread out the traffic for the yard waste rush.
- Lots of contamination in cardboard

Comments about operating safely:

- Limit # of cars
- Monitor traffic flow
- Wear masks
- Separate lane for yard waste

Write in comments regarding safety:

- Limit number of cars to an area.
- Rockport: Opened a separate lane just for yard waste
- Minuteman HHW facility may be using Sign Up Genius for residents to make an appt.
- Danvers: TS is run by Covanta/JRM. They are requiring residents to bring their own hard hat & safety vest for using the transfer station building. In the past, they were provided that by the transfer station. Also revamping events from full-blown weekend events collecting 6-7 items, to one-item collection events lasting 4 hours on a weekday.
- Devens: We require masks to enter the site.

Comments about payment challenges:

- Newburyport started [Unipay](#) system for Bulky Waste, Yard Waste and mattresses (no cash). All done online, it was an upgrade done quickly. Danvers also uses Unipay. Newburyport's recycling center opened early June, YW opened in April. They've changed the traffic flow and # of cars allowed onsite. The gatekeeper checks for contamination. Still takes cash for some items because they have no internet/wifi. They also employ pre-aid stickers and mail-in checks. Outreach via mass e-mail, website, gatekeeper, TV, cable, Mayor. Lots of new printed signs with pictures.

Write in comments regarding payment challenges:

- For bulky and yard waste, Danvers just changed payment to online only. Danvers is using Unipay for bulky item stickers and yard waste stickers as well. It's the same system in place for paying other things across town departments.
- Wellfleet used a file cabinet to create a drawer to reach to the driver's window.
- Granville: Changed to mail in checks, no cash.
- Maynard/Bolton: Stickers are encouraged to be paid by mail with SAS for return sticker.
- Wachusett Watershed Regional Recycling Center: Accept cash and checks

Other innovations: working remotely!

Presentation: Charlotte Milan, Town of Arlington Curbside and Drop-off Programs

(Starts at minute 55:16 in recording.)

- Town offers curbside collection as well as drop-off for recycling. They do not have a transfer station, but the DPW yard serves as the location for monthly pop-up CHARM collection.
- It was a priority for them to reassure residents about services, and yard waste was a stressor for many. Pick-up was continued to appease the public. They experienced a little uptick in trash which they attribute to early spring cleaning. Trash levels have evened out.
- No charge for collection at the curb. They also worked to rededicate themselves to enforcing trash limits.
- Citizens concerned with the haulers not wearing masks and touching their trash barrels, prompted them to work with hauler/drivers/laborers to start wearing masks, especially with manual collection. It has been important to keep safe distancing and cleaning protocols.
- No changes were made to the most of their programs: trash/recycling/yard waste collection stayed intact.
- Program changes away from the curb:
 - Reuse: Fix-it clinic went virtual
 - Cancelled 1st town-wide yard sale
 - Pivoted on Eco-week in April to Earth Day online
 - City resources from animal control and the Middle School green team were active supporters and created podcasts
 - Changes at the Recycling Drop-Off:
 - No electronics accepted
 - Stopped taking propane tanks
 - Moved donation bins so that they would continue to be accessible in the parking lot (textile and book collection)
 - Cancelled Recycling Center pop-up events March-June (monthly drop-off using shipping containers in DPW yard)
- Currently working on health and safety protocols with the Health Department: focus on distancing and PPE requirements
- Hope to re-open the Recycling Center pop-up events starting in July
 - Will spread out containers/collection areas
 - Will limit people and parking, with signed walking areas (usually see between 200-300 visitors)
 - Volunteers to direct traffic and queue cars. Will be instructed to keep a safe distance and stay in one spot.
 - Staffing works better for them vs signage
- Outreach efforts:
 - Food scraps: carts and biobags available, touchless pick-up (residents drive up/take)
 - 4 private companies operate in town, all by private subscription
 - City provides carts and biobags to new customers of any private hauler for food scrap collection, unless vendor uses another kind of container
 - Also have drop-off of food scraps in 3 locations with 96G carts
 - Rain barrel distribution: this weekend (6/20/20), using traffic cones and tape for distancing
- Going forward:
 - How to help without being “hands on” - hard for eager volunteers
 - They have a robust school food scrap diversion program in 10 schools, will have to think about how this will work if students are eating in classrooms this fall. May be an opportunity to empower classroom leaders

- They are awash in plastic bags now with no outlets except supermarkets. This pandemic has exposed the weakness of that dependence. Charlotte hopes that the plastic film industry will provide more support for municipal collection of film- perhaps bale?
- City is also looking at improvements regarding online payment.

Write in comments:

- Charlotte is right you have to have people at each station for drop off.
- Cambridge recycle center is doing very similar thing with distancing all the little depots for residents to dropoff.

Q: Who picks up compost in Arlington?

A: Don't have preferred vendor. Have four companies all working in Arlington competing for residential business. Arlington has offered to work with all of them.

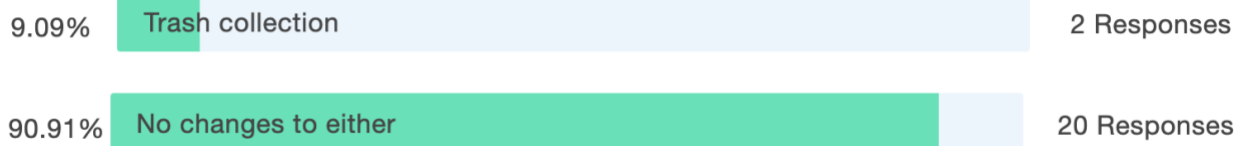
Open Discussion and Polls

Poll:

8 of 14. 8. Have you suspended or altered your curbside trash and recycling collection programs?

22 of 65 Attendees responded

Multiple choice with single answer



Write in comment:

- In Chelmsford, we just suspended bulk and textiles, but I think you mean that to be different than "trash", sorry! I was the 9%

Poll:

9 of 14. 9. If curbside trash and recycling collection were suspended or altered, which services21 of 65 Attendees have still not resumed?

Multiple choice with single answer

100%	<div><div></div>There were no changes</div>	21 Responses
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Poll:

10 of 14. 10. Have you made any changes to your other curbside collection programs? Check all that apply. 14 of 65 Attendees responded

Multiple choice with multiple answers

57.14%	<div><div></div>Bulky waste collection</div>	8 Responses
35.71%	<div><div></div>Yard waste collection</div>	5 Responses
7.14%	<div><div></div>Overflow bags</div>	1 Responses
50%	<div><div></div>Reuse & Recycling collections for textiles and HH goods</div>	7 Responses
7.14%	<div><div></div>Compost/Organics</div>	1 Responses

Poll:

11 of 14. 11. If a curbside collection service was suspended, which services have still not resumed? Check all that apply. 4 of 65 Attendees responded

Multiple choice with multiple answers

25%	<div><div></div>Bulky waste collection</div>	1 Responses
25%	<div><div></div>Yard waste collection</div>	1 Responses
50%	<div><div></div>Reuse & recycling collections for textiles and HH goods.</div>	2 Responses
25%	<div><div></div>Compost/Organics</div>	1 Responses

Write in comments related to program suspensions:

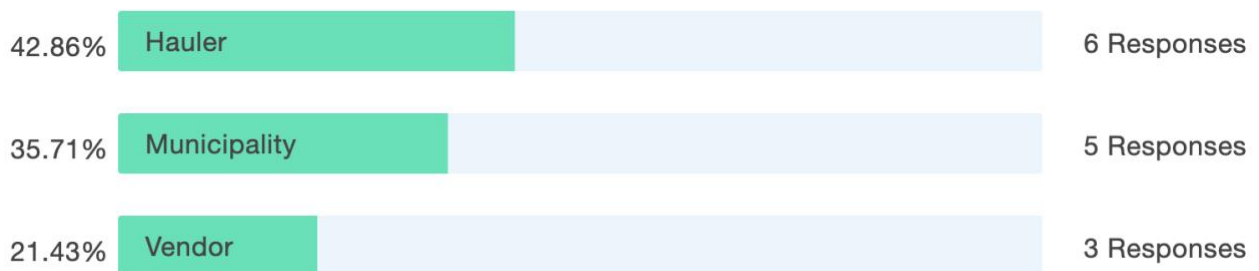
- Chelmsford: Suspended bulky waste, with the understanding that we would see an increase in trash curbside. This would accomplish two goals: reduce Covanta cost and make hauler logistics easier.
- Auburn: Bulky waste collection was suspended by the hauler; we have not heard info on resuming.
- Andover: Suspended collection at schools, paused expansion to other Town buildings.
- Cambridge: RE organics collection: We have 3-person collection trucks but had to stop due to social distancing. So, in order to collect organics, we would have had to transport the 3rd collection staff by separate vehicle to the route
- Danvers: Textile Recycling was suspended by Simple Recycling but started back up a while ago.

Poll:

12 of 14. 12. If you suspended a service, for the most part, who initiated the suspension?

14 of 65 Attendees responded

Multiple choice with single answer



Discussion

- Ed McGrath (Bedford): Suspended overflow trash bags (required if resident sets out more than 48G trash cart holds. Also suspended use of second trash cart since they didn't have enough in inventory. Overflow bags suspended to protect Republic employees. Bulky waste collection suspended as well.
 - Recently these services have resumed.
 - Town has ongoing discussions with Republic. They considered using an overflow dumpster, but Town Manager nixed the idea wanting people to stay at home.
 - The hauler advised when they were ready to accept overflow trash at the curb again. They have had some problems with the quantity of bulky waste set-out at curb.

Poll:

13 of 14. 13. Have any of your other municipal solid waste and recycling programs or events been suspended? 20 of 65 Attendees responded

Multiple choice with multiple answers



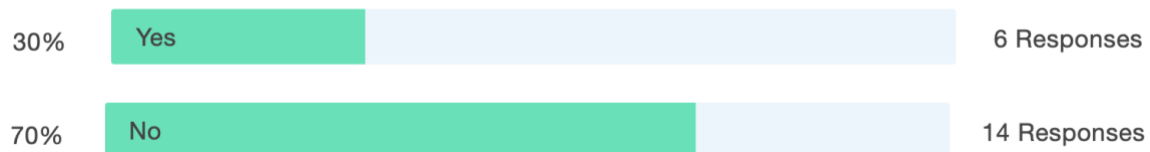
Write in comments related to suspension of programs and events:

- Bedford: Planning a shredding/recycling event in Sept. But everything is tentative until it happens.
- Melrose: Cancelled Swap Day events for 2020, although Zero Waste Melrose has not formally announced the suspension of the Sept event.
- NBSWMD: Has kept collections going, May 30th Earth Machine Day & June 13 Community paper shedding day. all very successful, residents were pleased and respectful.

Poll:

14 of 14. 14. Have you had an increase in illegal dumping? 20 of 65 Attendees responded

Multiple choice with single answer



Write in comments related to illegal dumping:

- Auburn: Extreme increase in illegal dumping.
- Brookline: Saw an uptick in illegal dumping during these past months. But since bulky started pick up again last week we have seen that almost disappear.
- Newburyport: Our cardboard containers were filling with package materials, so we have to station someone there on drop off days.

Final Comments

- Seeing more virtual repair events planned
 - Andover: Cancelled fledgling repair clinics with library.
 - Southbridge will host 2nd virtual Repair Café June 20, 2020: <https://www.facebook.com/events/200221447686692/>
 -
- Danvers is revamping events from weekend to work week to allow for fewer participants and focus on single material at a time.

Forum Ended at 11:30am

Useful hyperlinks

- Repair Cafes:
 - Maynard and Bolton Virtual Repair Cafe - [Fixer or Observer Sign up](#)
 - Maynard and Bolton Virtual Repair Cafe - [Guests with broken items](#)
 - Southbridge's 2nd virtual Repair Café: <https://www.facebook.com/events/200221447686692/>
- Household Hazardous Waste:
 - Devens Regional Household Hazardous Products Collection Center Special Covid-19 Procedures Required: www.DevensHHW.com
- Online Payment:
 - Unipay: <https://www.unibank.com/business/unipay-online-payment-solution>