

Danville Town Services Committee Decision Making Template

Intent and Purpose: *The intention of the Town Services Committee is to provide recommendations to the Selectboard on whether the proposed service should be provided by the Town of Danville. This template provides guidance in recording and presenting information as part of a decision-making process to identify key information and determine possible options, rather than starting with a given course of action in mind.*

Task Analysis Stage – Proposed Service Evaluation

What is the proposed service being reviewed? This section should clearly state the decision that must be made. A brief, high-level description.

Proposed Service: Review of Town Recycling Center (RC) and possible changes

Task Analysis Stage – Gather Information

What do you know? Key information items that are important and/or relevant to deciding about the issue; some things cannot be known. Ideally run down as many initial assumptions as possible and turn into facts. Outline Format.

Facts and Assumptions: The RC operates on Saturdays, 8am-12pm November-April and 8am-12:30pm May-October. Designated for Danville residents, but residents from adjoining towns *occasionally* utilize this center. The RC accepts a wide range of recyclable materials, based on guidelines provided by Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District (NEKWMD); materials collected on Saturdays are picked up during the following week by NEWWMD and trucked to their facility for sorting and disposal. The collection boxes are clearly marked with signage that says what should and should not, go in each box. The RC follows guidelines from NEKWMD. The RC does not accept trash, except for a small amount of waste that is mistakenly included with recycled material. There is no fee levied for recycling. On any given Saturday, approximately 200 residents visit the RC.

Last year, the Town added a bulky waste feature that replaced periodic bulky waste days at the Town Forest area off Bruce Badger Memorial Highway. There are two large open-air dumpsters for this service, one for metal and the other for all other bulky waste, including tires. There is a fee for the collection of bulky waste; examples on the day I observed included two large recliners, a couch, two large floor rugs and various and sundry other materials that are not recyclable. When first implemented there was some negative reaction from residents that were used to dropping off waste at the Town forest. When it operated, bulky drop-off there was charge on a donation basis, and the donations never covered the cost of disposal, leaving the Town on the hook for the difference. The fee structure at the RC is roughly designed to “break even” and it comes close. Some items have a clear fee; other items are at the judgment of the attendant. At present (Oct 25) the large majority of residents have accepted this new method and fee structure for bulky waste disposal with just a handful of continued malcontents who complain every time they are asked to pay.

The RC building is attached to the Town Garage. It was built in 2022 using a grant from NEKWMD. It runs the length of the adjoining garage, and is wide enough for two rows of large collection boxes with walking space between them. The attendant believes it would be advantageous if the facility were a bit larger, but there are property restrictions that may impede on any expansion. For example, the parking is inadequate during certain hours of any given Saturday. The parking lot design was impinged during construction because it encroached on wetlands, a fact that likely makes expansion unfeasible if not impossible due to remediation costs. At peak times, parking can be impeded in a couple of ways: 1) limited parking spots adjacent to the building which results in people parking away from the building but in the driveway, impeding traffic flow, and 2) by residents who use the facility on a quarterly basis and “camp out” in a parking space for as long as 30 minutes while they unload and sort a pick-up truck load of recycling.

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The collection process appears to run smoothly, but the attendant has to take care to visually monitor the various collection boxes because residents will occasionally misplace acceptable recyclable material in the wrong box. If the attendant is immediately available, most people who are unsure will ask for guidance, but with one attendant on duty, if he is outside helping with a bulky item, a return to the building invariably requires a quick check of the material boxes and moving misplaced items. There are some materials of questionable destination – e.g., what goes in the electronics box? TV's, etc., but not coffee makers and other appliances. On the day I observed, there were many questions but no apparent upset.

The current operation of the RC is fast-paced but positive and reflects the experience of the current attendant, who appears to know everyone who comes in. I observed little loitering on the day I observed, a factor that helps smooth the overall operation of the facility in light of its limited parking.

Brainstorm & Evaluate Options – Develop and Compare Options

After Task Analysis to ensure alignment and to clarify the ask. Developed Options are ALL reasonable general approaches to handling the issue. Cross out any excluded options with a brief reason why they didn't pass a FAST test: Feasible / Acceptable/ Suitable / Timely. For each option, explain the option in detail, then bullet benefits and risks (positive and negative) for each option. Next, compare options by creating comparison criteria and compare them to narrow. Outline Format.

Developed Options:

1. **Transition from resident-sorted recycling to zero-sort.** In a zero-sort facility (e.g., St Johnsbury Transfer Station, operated by Casella Waste), all purported recyclable materials are collected enmasse in a large dumpster for purported sorting offsite (separate from its trash collection dumpsters). Casella charges a fee for the deposit of recyclables based on a 30-gallon bag size. There is no monitoring of what is put in the recycling dumpster, and fee collection is based on the honor system. On any given day, a visual review of the contents of that dumpster would spot innumerable items that *do not belong* because they are not actually recyclable. As a result, Casella makes a decision off-site whether to sort the material or put it in the trash. They have a low threshold (5% visual estimate of contaminants?) for deciding that the entire load will go in the landfill; this obviously defeats the purpose of recycling. The fee charged is intended to discourage people from bringing things to recycle in zero-sort without also paying for trash disposal, and so the recycling fee also partially offsets the cost of disposing of an entire container of contaminated recyclables.
2. **Expand the RC building and parking area** to improve traffic flow and the general operation of the site.
3. **Continue to operate as-is but add staffing.** Currently there is one paid attendant who has an experience-based handle on the operation of the RC, but the layout of the facility makes it difficult to monitor inside recycling and exterior bulky waste collection. At various times there have been volunteers willing to work at the facility, but no one is there on a consistent basis to support the attendant. This means that the attendant is "giving up" every Saturday morning to be on site. This risks burnout over time; it also means that the attendant cannot be sick or miss a Saturday for family engagements. I attended a meeting in the Town Office in July during attended by two Select Board members in which the need for hiring an assistant was discussed in detail. A promise was made to post a job but to date that appears not to have happened. There has been a spotty history with volunteers; some have been helpful, others less so as they seemed to want to challenge rules of operation. The greatest success has been with the teenage sons of the attendant, who developed the experience enabling them to run the operation in the attendant's absence. The select board decided it could not pay the oldest son when he turned 16, out of concern for nepotism. If the Town cannot attract reliable

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assistants at the proposed hourly wage, then thought should be given to raising the wage offering.

4. **Get out of the recycling business.** The RC is offered as a service to Danville taxpayers (and the occasional interloper) and by observation, feedback, and usage counts (200/week) is a valued Town service.

Compare Options:

Transition from resident-sorted recycling to zero-sort. Explore transitioning this Town service to NEKWMD (Casella?).

- a. This would be run as a zero-sort site
- b. Reduces supervision
- c. Creates more waste into the landfill stream
- d. Cost differential is unknown
- e. May result in community resistance to the change

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Expand the RC building and/or parking area

- a. Residents already know how to use the facility
- b. Improvement cost is unknown
- c. Limited available land onsite (wetlands)

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Continue to operate as-is but add staffing

- a. Should encourage staff retention
- b. Ensures sufficient staff onsite at busiest times
- c. Slight cost increase, some of which is already in the budget

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Get out of the recycling business

- a. Would probably result in a demand for repayment of the grant.
- b. Would save Town ongoing operational costs
- c. Potential littering problems
- d. Residents would likely be upset

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Selection – Refinement and Recommendation

After Option Development, come together to validate the options and confirm recommendation(s); refine details, costs, proposals. Summarize recommendation to the TSC –include nuances, especially of sub-options, for presentation to the Selectboard. Reference back to specific option recommended and the reasoning for the recommendation. Narrative and outline formats.

Refinement of Recommendations(s):

Transition from resident-sorted recycling to zero-sort

This option was briefly discussed and quickly rejected, as the consensus is that it risked recyclables ending up in the waste stream for the reasons outlined in the previous section

Expand the RC building and/or parking area

Briefly discussed. Keith Gadapee reminded the committee of the negotiation with the State that was required to install the bulky waste containers. There is not adequate space for expansion of the building or parking lot.

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Continue to operate as-is but add staffing

The committee had a wide-ranging discussion of the current RC facility and its operation. There was some discussion about possibly reverting the bulky waste collection system back to the twice-annually at the Town Forest model that came before. This was initially cited as a way to relieve the load on the attendant; it was noted that before bulky waste was moved to this site, the attendant could stay in the building and manage the transfer flow. There was also some consideration given to staggering the bulky waste days (once monthly, bi-monthly, etc.) to take pressure off the attendant. It was ultimately decided to stay with the status quo, and that the real concern with the operation of the RC is a concern that the current attendant has no back-up, meaning he cannot be sick or take a Saturday off. Previously, some of the volunteers had reached a proficiency level where they could be trusted to run the site when the attendant was absent, but that was volunteer teenage help and that cannot be sustained.

Get out of the recycling business

No one on the committee thought this option would be accepted by the community.

TSC Recommendations to the Selectboard:

Continue to operate as-is but add staffing

Submission Date: October 9, 2025

Selectboard Feedback/Comments:

Revision History

If TSC or Selectboard respond with revisions, please track below to ensure that everyone is up to date.

Name	Description	Date