

## **Report of the OceanView Trash Committee**

### **March 15, 2024**

#### **Introduction and Background**

The Town of Falmouth changed the way trash and recyclables are collected. The change had little-to-no effect on OceanView residents living in apartments. But the use of two 64-gallon, rolling containers called toters (one for trash and another for recyclables) did have direct impact on residents of cottages. This committee, composed of both cottage dwellers and OceanView management included residents Tom Allen, Len Freeman and Kathryn Porter and Wendy Pierce, OceanView Operations Coordinator.

#### **Committee Focus**

The Committee report is intended to benefit OceanView cottage residents, and OceanView management

#### **The Problem**

The use of toters mandated by the Town of Falmouth created both real and potential problems for OceanView cottage residents. To gain insight from residents a survey was developed and delivered to every cottage.

- Real problems were quickly apparent in this community. While many cottage residents are strong, vigorous, and mobile, many are not. Complaints about the size of the toters and the need to place them where large, automated trucks could empty them were numerous. In bad weather snow and ice loomed as hazards in placing and returning the toters to cottages.
- Potential problems relate to the unpredictability of the weather and the reality that, in a community like OceanView, a resident who is fully functional one day may need assistance the next either because of sickness, accident or advancing frailty.

#### **Our Collaborators**

The committee engaged cottage residents, the OceanView Operations Department, and the Town of Falmouth in conducting its research and developing recommendations.

## **Origins of the Problem**

The committee met with Falmouth Town Manager, Nathan Poore, who described the process that resulted in the use of the large toters. The Town had no choice. A company called Ecomaine is the recipient of Falmouth's recycling and landfill collections. The Town contracts with a company called Casella to transport the material to Ecomaine. Casella notified the town that a new, automated collection process using toters must be used. There are no other companies willing or able to replace Casella at this time. Looking to the future, Falmouth has entered discussions with other localities focused on a multi-community approach.

More information on the collection process may be found at;  
<https://www.falmouthme.org/public-works-department/pages/automated-trash-recycling-collection>

## **Survey of Cottage Residents**

A survey of the 148 cottages was developed in order to understand better the issues encountered by the users of the new collection process (See Appendix A). The results are summarized below.

- 94 surveys were returned. A 64% response
- Results for the following questions were:
  - Can the toters be stored in garage?
    - ◆ 6% no; Issue is almost entirely in older cottages.
  - Are they difficult to move in good weather?
    - ◆ Yes 29%; Issue is mostly in older cottages.
  - Are they difficult to move in bad weather?
    - ◆ Yes 71%; Across all cottages.
  - Do you need help?
    - ◆ Yes 28%; Across all cottages.
  - Are neighbors helping each other?
    - ◆ Yes 44%; Across all cottages.
  - Do you share toters?
    - ◆ Yes 15%; Mostly where trucks back in.
- Comments on problems and ideas are summarized below:
  - Problem encountered by residents
    - ◆ Toters are big, awkward and heavy
    - ◆ Too big for some garages
    - ◆ Residents with mobility limitations have difficulty moving toters even in good weather

- ◆ Plowing can interfere with toter movement and placement
- ◆ Reluctance to put out toters when there is ice and snow
- ◆ Trucks may not pick up OceanView side roads if snowy or icy
- Ideas from residents
  - ◆ Smaller toters
  - ◆ Better plowing for access to pickup points
  - ◆ More OceanView attention to ice, snow removal (particularly driveways)
  - ◆ Set out every other week
  - ◆ Assistance from OceanView maintenance for those needing help
  - ◆ OV weather alert (when no pickup)

A compilation of selected comments attached to returned surveys may be found in Appendix B.

## **Findings**

Surveys went to 148 cottages and 94 were returned. This high percentage of response (64%) indicates the topic resonated with residents.

Among most significant findings are:

- Almost 3 out of 4 say the toters are difficult to maneuver in bad weather, and
- 1 in 4 say they need help regardless of weather

Among the most consistent problems mentioned are:

- Toters are big/awkward/heavy
- The trucks may not pick up side roads if they are snow covered or icy
- Inadequate ice and snow removal makes moving TOTERS hazardous (particularly in driveways)

While discussing the survey results with the Falmouth Town Manager he offered to provide, at no cost, smaller toters (48-gallon vice 64-gallon) to those who request them.

Residents can request assistance placing and/or returning toters through the OceanView work order system.

## **Recommendations**

For cottage residents:

- ◆ Request smaller toters if appropriate
- ◆ Implement a local “Trash buddy” system to help one another
- ◆ Consider placing toters for collection every other week
- ◆ Place a work order with the front desk for assistance if appropriate
- ◆ Call the Town of Falmouth Public Works Department at (207) 781-3919 for information on collections if inclement weather is forecast

For OceanView Management:

- ◆ Develop and implement a plan to identify residents who desire smaller toters
- ◆ Work with the Town of Falmouth to facilitate exchanging toters
- ◆ Develop a plan for maintenance department to handle an increased request for assistance with toters
- ◆ Ensure plowing, shoveling and ice removal is adequate
- ◆ Include this report in the OceanView portal and library for resident access

## Appendix A

### TRASH & RECYCLING BIN SURVEY

The OceanView Trash Committee is surveying cottage residents about their experience with the new trash and recycling bins. Please help us understand how things are going.

1. Are you able to store the bins in your garage? If not, where are you storing them?

2. Are the bins difficult for you to maneuver and pull out to the street in good weather?

No

Somewhat

Yes

When snow and ice are present?

No

Somewhat

Yes

3. Do you need help?

Yes

No

If yes, what kind of help do you need?

4. Do you or your neighbors help each other pull the bins out to the street? Please explain.

5. Do you and any of your neighbors share bins? If so, please explain.

6. Please describe any problems you have encountered with the bins.

7. Please tell us your ideas for making use of the bins easier or more convenient.

Please make any further comments and suggestions on the back of this paper.

Name (optional)\_\_\_\_\_ Cottage# (optional)\_\_\_\_\_

***Please return your survey to the Front Desk in the Main Lodge by Tuesday, February 13***

## Appendix B

### COMMENTS FROM RESIDENTS

“Sometimes difficult to place them due to snow and placing so that truck does not drive into island in front of cottages.”

“All in all there are some serious problems here - for a retirement community.”

“I’m short and old! Avoid falling on ice! No sun on part of driveway.”

“I have COPD and shortness of breath. Wasn’t an issue when I could put trash out right in front of our cottage.”

“We can get bins out of the garage, but mobility (walker) prohibits the bins to move further down the street or back inside.”

“Chris used to do it for the last several years. Now neighbors get bins to where they are picked up, but if they can’t (health, hospital?) - we are stuck.”

“Too clumsy to move back and forth with a rollator needed to walk.”

“Make/give us smaller ones. When I first came here I realized that I couldn’t possibly move what we were given for recycling so I bought one for \$80. On wheels. It was a great size. Now what am I supposed to do with it?”

“It might help to have each cottage visited by a team to run thru an indoctrination/“show and tell.”

“No safe footing in bad weather. On cold days ice forms at garage door, preventing safe exit or entry. 1) provide smaller bins. 2) De-ice in front of garage door.”

“There are people who have problems pushing those bins when they are on walkers or have canes and balance problems. Could those let the desk know and pub-works could haul the night before.”

“When snow, as in week of Jan 20, plowing did not allow enough room at street to place bins. Keep ice and snow off our individual driveways (a problem with [my cottage] always) and off the cul-de-sac, to make it easier to wheel bins out to street.”

“We have agreed to share trash with yellow bags. Not convenient to share recycling because items are not in a bag.”

“I have to put my bins across the street and in my neighbor’s drive. Not easy for a 95 year old.”