

History of Trash & Recycling in Seekonk

Seekonk began recycling in 1991 with a bi-weekly collection program. Along with the start of the recycling program, Seekonk took its first step to fund the solid waste and recycling program through a user fee. The fee was determined using a full cost accounting method that includes all expenses necessary to run the program including collection, disposal and all related operations. The first fee was \$115 and has fallen and risen over the years, due to fluctuations in disposal fees, labor costs, fuels costs, as well as contracted increases.

Seekonk residents can claim an exemption from the program if they currently have a contract with a private hauler.

With everyone paying the same fee there was no tangible benefit to those committed to recycling or solid waste reduction. Also, the same fee applied regardless of household size meaning a person living alone putting out minimal waste was paying the same fee as a family of six that was generating a significantly greater amount of waste.

Although the majority of residents were taking part in the recycling program there were those who needed a further incentive, a financial one, to comply with the mandatory, but largely unenforceable by-law. With this in mind the Town implemented a two-tier fee system in 1994.

The first tier of the system, the flat fee, covers the collection costs and other fixed costs of the program. The flat fee is a stable, predictable source of revenue, set by the Town each year, guaranteeing that all fixed costs will be met.

Residents are also required to purchase designated blue “pay as you throw” bags to dispose of MSW. The purchase price of the bags covers the cost of disposal of MSW. This is the second tier of the program. With this tiered approach, a single person would typically have to pay for less bags than a family of six each year-as well as paying less for bags if they recycle and/or compost more.

The “blue bags” are available at local grocery stores and retail stores throughout the Town. The bags are available in two sizes, large 33 gallon holding approx. 25 lbs of trash and small 15 gallon holding approx. 12 lbs of trash. Bags are sold in packs of 10. The bags are shipped direct to the vendor by the bag company-Boxes & Bags. We issue an invoice to the vendor and the income is placed in the revolving fund to cover the bag cost and the General Fund to cover the disposal cost. In 2001 DPW instituted an enterprise account to retain funds to continue to fund future programs.

The first year of the program saw a reduction of about 18 tons per week of trash, or at that time, \$35,000 in tipping fees. Each year we see a reduction in solid waste disposal and an increase in recycling.

Currently the Town is recycling approx. 50% of its MSW up from 35% in 1995.

For FY26, the blue bag price is \$1.48 for large bags and \$.91 for small. Our current tip fee is \$109.20. In 1993, the bags were priced at \$.50 for large and \$.28 for small, and the tipping fee was \$56.00.

Over the years, the world has seen some major changes in the world of solid waste and recycling. Advances in technology have increased our ability to recycle more materials, and sort them more efficiently. Changes in global policies and trade agreements have affected where we are able to send materials, and at what cost. Landfills have closed, and alternative means of disposal have come and gone to meet our ever-growing need for a place to send our refuse. Contracts have been negotiated, renewed and extended. Labor laws, vehicle technology and fuel costs have evolved.

Businesses also go through major changes- our hauler for most of this history has been ABC Disposal, who filed for bankruptcy in 2016, and then was sold to MEGA/Waste Connections/E L Harvey in 2022. MEGA continued to fulfill the existing contracted services through 2024, then were the selected candidate from the pool of two bidders for our new contract for 2025.

Based on their experience, Seekonk officials believe that the two-tier system is the most practical, equitable way to fund solid waste and recycling programs. With the flat fee being a true full cost reflection of actual expenses, it can be modified up or down without affecting other Town departments and services as it would if the funding source was the property tax base. While having to purchase the blue bags for trash may feel like an inconvenience, it is the most fair and equitable way to allocate costs, as well as keeping the costs as low as possible for all residents.

To increase understanding of the costs involved with the trash & recycling program, and in the interest of transparency, we have compiled a historical view of the fluctuations in annual fees, blue bag prices and tipping fees-along with a timeline of contracts and contracted increases through the end of our current contract-which is effective through 6/30/2029. The next RFP (request for proposals) open bid process is expected to be announced in 2027/2028, after

which a new trash hauler may be selected, a new contract with new rates will be agreed to-and presented to Town Meeting for consideration.

While some historical data is currently unavailable or in the process of being verified, here is a snapshot of the evolution of our trash bill here in Seekonk as of October 2025:

FY	Annual Trash Fee	Small Bag Fee	Large Bag Fee	Annual Tonnage Rate	Contracted Increase	Notes
1993		\$0.28	\$0.50	\$56.00		
1994		\$0.28	\$0.50			
1995		\$0.28	\$0.51			
1996		\$0.28	\$0.51			
1997		\$0.29	\$0.53			
1998		\$0.29	\$0.53			
1999		\$0.29	\$0.53			
2000		\$0.47	\$0.83			
2001		\$0.47	\$0.83			
2002		\$0.47	\$0.83			
2003		\$0.57	\$0.97	\$63.04	2%	New contract 7/1/03-6/30/09
2004		\$0.57	\$0.97	\$77.00	2%	
2005		\$0.57	\$0.97	\$79.00	2%	
2006	\$130.00	\$0.57	\$0.97	\$81.00	2%	
2007	\$164.00	\$0.57	\$0.97	\$83.50	2%	
2008	\$164.00	\$0.57	\$0.97	\$86.00	2%	
2009	\$148.07	\$0.57	\$0.97	\$88.50	2%	Contract Extension 7/1/09-6/30/14
2010		\$0.57	\$0.97	\$82.00	2%	
2011		\$0.57	\$0.97	\$82.50	2%	
2012	\$189.61	\$0.57	\$0.97	\$83.00	2%	
2013	\$180.00	\$0.60	\$1.00	\$83.00	2%	
2014	\$179.00	\$0.60	\$1.00	\$72.00	2.50%	New contract 7/1/14-6/30/24
2015	\$184.00	\$0.60	\$0.95	\$73.00	2.50%	
2016	\$180.00	\$0.60	\$0.95	\$74.00	2.50%	
2017	\$195.00	\$0.62	\$1.00	\$75.00	2.50%	
2018	\$209.10	\$0.62	\$1.01	\$76.00	2.50%	
2019	\$209.10	\$0.62	\$1.01	\$77.00	2.50%	
2020	\$211.27	\$0.62	\$1.01	\$78.00	2.50%	
2021	\$213.93	\$0.65	\$1.04	\$79.00	2.50%	
2022	\$216.47	\$0.66	\$1.06	\$80.00	2.50%	
2023	\$222.05	\$0.70	\$1.13	\$82.00	2.50%	
2024	\$229.04	\$0.75	\$1.20	\$82.00	2.50%	
2025	\$299.87	\$0.88	\$1.44	\$105.00	4%	New contract 7/1/25-6/30/29
2026	\$315.00	\$0.91	\$1.48	\$109.20	4%	
2027	TBD	TBD	TBD	\$113.57	4%	
2028	TBD	TBD	TBD	\$118.11	4%	
2029	TBD	TBD	TBD	\$122.84	4%	