Memo

To: Members of the Lisbon Town Council/ Glenn Michalowski, Town Manager/Sarah Bennett, Assistant Town Manager/ Samantha Bryant, Finance Director and Finance Committee Staff Agent

From: Lisbon Finance Committee (Linda Berube, Don Fellows, Ray Robishaw, Sam Prindle, Kevin Ridley)

Subject: The Future for Handling of Municipal Waste

Date: June 5, 2024

Background - On the May 7th Town Council meeting agenda was item 9E which was the Finance Committee's recommendations for the upcoming budget. In that recommendation was a suggested future direction for the fee structure of the Transfer station. That item as a whole was completely overlooked during the meeting.

The committee was expecting to have some feedback on that item but got none. On the meeting that was scheduled for May 21st, Item 9C was scheduled as a "Transfer Station Fee Structure Discussion" That item was moved up in the agenda to immediately follow the first section of Audience participation and appeared very much as a hearing. It was not but there was really no discussion on the part of the Council. After some appearance of confusion for direction forward, the matter was tabled. It was not tabled for future discussion at an identified date, so effectively there is no action now pending or expected.

This committee was very disappointed, initially at the total omission of discussion on May 7th and in the inaction on May 21st. We want to chalk all of that up to miscommunication and to move forward in a positive fashion. We believe there is much to be gained here.

Ancient History - For what it's worth and as some of you know from experience, this town has been dealing with the transfer station system issue for a number of years. There are position papers dealing with disposal at least back to September of 2019. One has asked to change our system to PAYT (pay per throw) and another has proposed purchasing a scale for use in assessing charges. One look was done by internal town staff, and another was done by the Finance Committee a year or so later. To date, the only recommendations to be accepted are the raising of permit fees for all the citizens and for "commercial haulers". This year, however, we will temporarily stop the recycling of plastic through a third-party vendor in anticipation of new state statute requirements.

Moving Forward this Year –

One of the goals of the Finance Committee has always been to find efficiencies in our government, not to just find places to "cut a budget". We recognize that there are lean times and times of adequate funding, but we want to be as properly lean as we can in any time period.

A second goal has been to have user fees that cover a portion of the waste flow system. We think that the portion of the waste disposal system that can be most positively impacted by

these fees is just the cost of disposal itself (tipping fees). If we are to encourage effective and efficient municipal government, then we should also encourage effectiveness and efficiency on the part of the users of its facilities.

One of the places in the municipal budget that we are sure there is room for improvement is in the funding structure for the Transfer Station. We proposed an action plan that would have taken effect in the upcoming budget as an interim fix, but now that will not happen. Some of you have been empathetic but, knowing that while the system used for the facility needs to be studied, it should not be done during "budget Season". The reasoning has been that the resulting and relatively quickly required implementation could be quite a shock to the community as a whole.

Proposal To Study Renewed- Therefore, we would like to propose (as we did in our recommendation memo previously) that the Town Council create an ad hoc body to give the issue thorough study over the next several months. We think it should include interested parties as well as those who could be positively or negatively affected. That may include commercial hauler representatives. The Finance Committee envisions outreach by ad hoc committee members to other communities, potential vendors of services, and to the relevant state agencies. They should also conduct a review of current and any proposed statutes. While we would also like to suggest specific timelines and deadlines, we feel that the decision as to exacting standards and timelines would more properly reside with the Town Council itself.

Direction for the Future – Having mentioned all of the above in the proposal, we think that any change to the system currently being used to fund and dispose of refuse is always going to be in the "budget season". Therefore, we submit that this challenge should be addressed quickly and that the ad hoc committee members should conduct one or two workshops with the Town Council during the process. Communication with our public is important and the government should maintain apparent and real transparency. Any resulting changes could be made up to a year from now if the study is effective and indicates that change is needed.

Summary – This committee has had an interest in the structure, the process and fee system for the Transfer Station for several years. We believe that this issue has been "kicked down the road" too many times and we do our citizens a disservice by not facing the problems (real or perceived) directly. While there has been turnover in the governing body over the years, one thing remains constant and that is that this situation is not diminished and deserves to be addressed now. While many "special interests" have presented themselves at times to the Town Council, the town as a whole has not benefited and the governing body, representing all of the citizens, needs to act.