

Energy and Recycling Committee (ERC) News

28.77% Recycling Rate for South Portland as of February 2015

How does this compare to our neighboring municipalities?

32.13% - Cape Elizabeth

41.58% - Falmouth

34.56% - Gorham

33.36% - Scarborough

DOLLARS AND CENTS OF RECYCLING

Earlier this year, when South Portland's Energy and Recycling Committee (ERC) set a **goal to increase municipal recycling from our current rate of 29% to 35% by 2017 and 40% by 2019**, we knew it was going to be a community-wide effort. In order to reach higher recycling rates, we need everyone in South Portland to think before you throw. The ERC will help by describing the benefits of recycling, what to recycle, and how our community is doing on reaching our goals in biweekly articles in the *Sentry* and in the South Portland Community Newsletter (which you can subscribe to online at southportland.org).

Higher community recycling rates will not only conserve natural resources and reduce pollution and greenhouse gases, but also have a direct economic benefit. Currently the City of South Portland pays \$70.50 per ton to dispose of municipal solid waste for its residents, whereas recyclable material costs the city \$0 per ton. Each cumulative ton of solid waste diverted through either recycling or composting therefore saves our city money. **According to Ecomaine's most recent data, South Portland disposed of 5,694 tons of solid waste and recycled 2,304 tons from March 2014 to February 2015. This cost us about \$401,445.**

There will always be trash to pick up, but if we as neighbors do our part, we can divert money from being thrown away to any number of other worthy projects within our communities. **For example, over the same time period above, if South Portland's recycling rate had been 35% or 40%, the city would have saved approximately \$34,927 or \$63,120 respectively.** These are real savings that can have a significant impact on our city's finances.

The ERC believes that increasing South Portland's recycling rate 11 plus percentage points by 2019 is quite attainable. According to the EPA, approximately 75% of our waste stream is recyclable. Through better communication and education on the benefits and methods of recycling, we will be able to meet and exceed these goals. Help our community do better for our environment and budget. Here are some resources that provide more information about recycling and composting locally:

<http://www.ecomaine.org>

<http://www.ecomaine.org/recycling/Dos%20Don%27t%20web%202012.pdf>

<http://garbagetogarden.org>