



TOWN OF BRISTOL, RHODE ISLAND
OFFICE OF TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

STEVEN CONTENTE
Town Administrator

March 26, 2026

Subject: Process Changes to Wastewater Biosolids and Compost Facility Operation

Dear Members of the Town Council,

I am providing this letter regarding operational changes to be considered for the Town's wastewater biosolids disposal and compost facility operations. This information is based on a careful evaluation of current practices, costs, and regulatory considerations. Due to changing market conditions—including a diminished market for compost manufactured from biosolids—and ongoing operational constraints, the Town's existing composting process has become increasingly difficult to sustain. As outlined in the attached Sludge Disposal Option Comparison (February 13, 2026), alternative approaches offer stable and compliant methods for managing these materials. It should be noted that this comparison does not include the cost of curbside yard waste collection, which is expected to be accommodated within the existing compost facility budget based on a review of comparable contracts in surrounding communities.

After reviewing available alternatives, the most feasible near-term approach is to continue dewatering sludge at the wastewater treatment facility. Compost facility personnel would then transport the resulting biosolids in "cake" form to the compost facility, where the existing infrastructure and equipment would be used to biodry the material, reducing its volume to approximately one-third of its original weight and lowering overall transportation and disposal costs. The biodried sludge would then be loaded onto trucks operated by a qualified third-party vendor for disposal.

If implemented, these changes would begin following the start of Fiscal Year 2027 (July 1, 2026).

As part of this transition, the following operational adjustments are proposed:

- Discontinue the practice of mixing sludge with yard waste at the compost facility.
- Issue a separate Request for Proposals (RFP) for the transportation and disposal of biodried wastewater sludge.
- Transition yard waste collection services to a contracted model, with the Town issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) through the Department of Public Works for curbside pickup.

- Curbside collection and resident drop-off of yard waste at the compost facility will continue under this approach.

The Town recognizes that these changes directly impact current operations and staff at the compost facility. We are committed to managing this transition thoughtfully and respectfully. Effort will be made to retain existing employees by aligning them with vacancies. Any affected staff will be given priority consideration for vacancy opportunities, and the Town will work closely with employees throughout this process.

Looking ahead, the Town should continue to evaluate long-term biosolids management strategies, including options that would allow for direct loading and transport from the wastewater treatment facility. While these alternatives may require upfront capital investment, they are expected to yield operational efficiencies and long-term cost savings.

Respectfully,



Steven Contente
Town Administrator