

Notes from Waste Reduction Citizen's Group Meeting  
2/12/2024

**Attendance:** Doug Pierce, Ed McKeon, Yuri Branzburg, Lorraine Panciera, Serena Livingston, Tamira Le, Kristen Jensen, Mike Daling, Erin Brennan, John Porter.  
DPW Staff: Chris Holden, Kim O'Rourke  
Consultant: Mark Dancy, Waste Zero

*Discussion and Questions – the meeting started out with questions from residents.*

**Q.** Why does the city not get energy back from the Southington Anaerobic Digester?

**A.** A certain amount of energy is used on site and another amount is used by the town of Southington as part of their host agreement. The cost to dispose of material there is cheaper than traditional trash disposal facilities.

**Q.** Why is this program not voluntary? Why make people do it?

**A.** Not enough people would participate if the program was just voluntary. It has to be mandatory to be cost effective. Otherwise, we are just adding more costs with no savings. If recycling was voluntary, we would not be recycling as much as we are today. It must be mandatory to be effective.

**Q.** Why just the Sanitation District?

**A.** The District was the place to start because the City controls the costs and could reduce the fee to customers. The City can manage the logistics and keep track of the numbers. We also felt it was important to do something to control the costs in the District.

**Q.** Why not dumpsters?

**A.** We need to roll this in phases. We continue to learn new things and the buildings that use dumpsters include a multiple number of tenants and different types of tenants, such as commercial and residential. It is more complex to effectively reach those people.

**Q.** Is there a cost to not picking up carts?

**A.** Yes, there are additional costs to send trucks and crews back out to empty carts once they are in compliance. This is a short term educational effort to teach people about the program.

**Q.** This program is not fair to everyone. Some people get a reduction, but renters do not.

**A.** That is one of the topics we hope this group will discuss. The City does offer an assistance program for renters. It was discussed that this is not clear and not every renter knows about it. We are working to adjust the program and our communications to make that clearer.

General discussion of offering this program through the private haulers so all of Middletown residents are participating.

**Q.** What are the numbers for revenue?

**A.** The District gave a rebate of approximately \$300,000 to cart customers. This was the disposal costs for those customers for the previous 12 months. Currently, we are on pace to spend approximately \$180,000 on disposal fees for this year, and are on pace to raise slightly less than that in bag fees, which makes sense, since we gave out free bags and some people had bags leftover from the pilot.

**Q.** Why are the bags so expensive?

**A.** The orange bags cost more because they include the cost of disposal in the bag. The bag is the payment receipt for the cost of disposal. If you don't use the orange bag, you aren't paying your sanitation bill. This method is set up similarly to other utility bills like electricity, where you pay for what you use. The cost of the bags cannot be compared to the typical bags you purchase anywhere because these bags include disposal costs, not just the cost of the bag.

This system is similar to purchasing a USPS box to mail a package. The cardboard box may not be that expensive, but the cost to mail the box is. The box itself may cost \$.50 but the cost of the box with the postage may be \$10 because it includes postage.

## EDUCATION and OUTREACH

There is a small group of interested individuals working on a direct mail piece and questionnaire.

### **Ideas that were suggested:**

- Direct mail
- Multimedia campaign including direct mail, social media, email blasts, etc..
- Have a welcome packet with information for new residents in the District.
- **Targeted** outreach directly to those not complying.
- How to handle multifamily – work through the landlord? Door to Door?
- Offer information in **Multiple languages** – or include information on where people can find the information in other languages.
- Use Electronic signs through the Police Department
- Put a banner across Main Street
- Post videos on a Youtube Channel
- Have short workshops to teach people how to do this – at the library, police department, city hall, etc.
- Talk about successes
- Important to communicate the numbers and data
- Important to show the homeowner how they benefit –
  - Maybe have a compost giveaway to demonstrate what happens to their food waste
- Do a video on institutions adopting the program – library, Wesleyan, schools.

## LANDLORD/TENANTS

Discussion of how most landlords are not passing on the savings to tenants and this is a new cost to renters, even if trash disposal is included in their lease. Discussion that landlords should be passing on this savings.

An idea was proposed to charge the landlords that do not provide materials (bags) to tenants full price and provide tenants with bags that are offset by full price assessment to landlords.

### **NEXT MEETING: March 11, 6pm, location TBD**

We will continue our landlord/tenant discussion and move into compliance.

Thanks to everyone who participated!

The meeting ended at 7:30 pm.