

## Sanitation District

The Sanitation District was formed in 1951 by Special Act No. 466, Section of the legislature. This Act was amended twice – once in 1959 and once in 1963. Neither amendment affects the substance of the Special Act. Special acts are enactments of the General Assembly and carry the same force of law as a statute, but are not codified in the General Statutes.

The purpose of the Act was to form a special taxing district to collect waste in one congregated area. This would allow a pooling of resources and keep costs low for customers. The District includes all property owners, so it benefits residents and businesses. This structure keeps the truck traffic to a minimum and protects the area from having multiple trash trucks driving through the area. Although it probably wasn't considered at the time, this also reduces the emissions in the area.

Traditionally the costs of the District have been one of the lowest in the State and has serviced as a benchmark for pricing throughout Middletown. The District has never charged additional fees such as extra fuel charges or covid charges. The District is also able to offer special services such as bulk waste collection and free brush collection all year long. They also accommodate their customers when possible. As city employees, Sanitation District crews can be called upon to assist with maintaining the roads during snowstorms and other weather events.

The Sanitation District does not make a profit and offers transparency and accountability, unlike private haulers.

### Service Charge

As a special taxing district, the Sanitation District must charge all property owners a fee, whether they use the service or not. This base service charge is necessary because it allows it to operate. District customers have enjoyed a low sanitation rate for decades. If someone chooses not to use the service, that is their choice, but they are diminishing the service for their neighbors. The Sanitation District can keep prices stable because everyone is required to pay into it. According to the Special Act of the Legislature and the City Charter, the fee is mandatory.

The City of Middletown Charter, Chapter VII § 1 Sanitary Disposal District; Boundaries, also supports the City's position that it is entitled to charge the maintenance and operation fee at issue. It reads as follows:

*Chapter VII: § 1 Sanitary Disposal District; Boundaries [Amended 11-4-2008]*

*The Sanitary Disposal District shall continue to be that portion of the City of Middletown as is constituted the Sanitary Disposal District on the effective date of this Charter, together with any other territory contiguous thereto which may hereafter be added in accordance with the provisions of this Charter. The expense for the maintenance and operation of said district shall be a service charge upon all property located within the district. The provisions of Special Act No. 466 (1951) of the Connecticut General Assembly not inconsistent with the provisions herein shall continue in effect.*

This provision of the charter is available online at :

[http://ecode360.com/12335120#./12335120?&\\_suid=14006863172630953521803738973](http://ecode360.com/12335120#./12335120?&_suid=14006863172630953521803738973)

## **What is the Sanitation District fee?**

Customers have to pay according to the service they use. A typical family, using one trash cart picked up once a week, used to pay \$199 every billing cycle. This pricing was slightly lower for smaller carts, and higher for dumpsters. The price changes if you use more than one cart and if it is picked up multiple times a week.

The Sanitation District is an enterprise fund, which means it's funding is totally separate from the City's general fund budget. Its expenses are paid for entirely by the fees collected. Generally, the budget is split into base costs (administrative & operational costs), collection costs (the cost of actually picking up at your property) and disposal costs, what the City pays to actually dispose the trash. With the SAYT program, the disposal cost was removed from the fee bill and added into the bag cost. The mandatory portion, per state law and city charter, is the base cost, which is a partial cost of the operation and management of the District. The actual cost to a property owner is dependent on what service the customer was using. This cost has not increased since 2012.

## **The Future Costs of Trash Disposal**

With increasing trash disposal costs, it won't be possible to keep the price at the same level. The District is at a crossroads of whether to condone price increases consistently and indefinitely, or pilot a proven system to reduce the amount of waste generated, so costs can be managed and customers have more control. If there is less waste, there are lower costs. The pilot also includes adding a curbside collection option for food scraps.

The Save as You Throw waste reduction program created a two tiered billing system. The fee bill from the City was reduced. The disposal cost of the trash was removed and put into the cost of specific bags that customers are now required to use. With this shift, customers now pay for exactly what they dispose. Those who generate less, pay less. Those who generate more, pay more.

### *Benefits of this program:*

Besides offering a curbside collection of food scraps, managing the waste more sustainably and controlling future cost increases, this program has had some unintended benefits.

- The City has received complaints over the years of some property owners taking advantage of the District services and bringing waste from other properties into the District. Requiring certain bags, reduces the incentive to bring in other waste.
- People who live on streets or corners where trash is picked up on different days, sometimes placed their carts out twice, thus getting two collections for the price of one. With the requirement of using designated bags that include the cost of disposal, others won't be subsidizing the cost of people that were "double dipping".