

Borough of Mechanicsburg  
Citizens Advisory Recycling Committee Meeting  
March 1, 2005, 6 PM

Chairman Shulman called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM

The following people were in attendance:

Councilmen: Kautz, McDermott, Ryder, Seagrist & Winchell  
Citizens Recycling Advisory Committee members: Diane Hollinger, Carl Hursh,  
Justin Miller, Arleen Shulman, Cecilia Viti  
Borough Staff: Glenda Boyer

Guest: Ed Ward, Penn Waste, Inc., Lee Ann Beck, Pennsylvania Environmental Council.

Ed Ward attended the meeting at the request of the committee to answer additional questions about trash and recycling services provided by Penn Waste, including Pay-As-You-Throw programs. Penn Waste services the Cumberland County communities of Camp Hill, East Pennsboro, Mechanicsburg, New Cumberland, Silver Spring and Wormleysburg. When Penn Waste bids on a contract, he reviews the past disposal records of the municipality. Unlimited collection bids are the highest because the cost of disposal greatly impacts the fee. Ed stated that communities that establish bids for unlimited service average about 50 pounds of waste per home weekly. Communities with 3 to 4 bas limits generate about 40 pounds of waste per week, and have greater amounts of recyclables collected. Although there are exceptions, the Penn Waste experience is that limiting the number of containers that can be set out weekly forces higher recycling rates.

Ed said that Penn Waste generally does not collect corrugated cardboard at curbside because it interferes with the dumping mechanism on the recycling truck. Cardboard could be collected if there were strict standards for breaking down boxes and sizing them so they are no greater than the size of the recycling bin opening. Penn Waste can provide special collections for large amounts of cardboard, like move-ins or move-outs, for a fee.

Ed responded to a question about the Camp Hill tag-a-bag program where residents may opt out of a quarterly garbage rate (\$40.74) in favor of a fee per bag. He said that only 14 residents of 2800 use the program. It was speculated that this was due to a lack of publicity about the program and the high cost per bag (\$3.50). Ed said it was ideal for people who set out one bag every week or every three weeks. Some other places with per bag rates serviced by Penn Waste include Elizabethtown Borough, where residents can set out one bag per week and must pay for additional bags, and Penn Township, York Co., where a fee is placed on every bag set out. Penn Waste does not use semi-automated or

automated collection of rigid containers. Penn Waste is introducing orange bags into communities with tag-a-bag systems. They will provide boxes of 200 bags to the municipality and rely on the municipality to sell them to residents. Ed cautioned against jumping into a full-scale Pay-As-You –Throw program. He said that his route drivers could determine if customers using the tag-a-bag option were cheating the system. Penn Waste would follow up with problem customers.

Justin Miller stated that if people were forced to use containers, they would use fewer containers. Justin added that in Carlisle Borough's experiences with Pay-as-You-Throw, it did not run into problems with people cheating the system by using commercial dumpsters.

Ed Ward also addressed the tagging of improperly set out recyclables. Penn Waste does this but most often the company will accept materials improperly prepared (as with newspapers placed in plastic bags) because leaving them behind can cause route and time problems. Penn Waste performs route audits to assess performance and efficiency.

Ed said in regard to climbing fees for waste service (due to insurance, fuel costs and wages) that there are 20 available outlets for the disposal of waste in Cumberland Co., providing competition. This is not the case in York and Lancaster Counties. Mechanicsburg would not see a large decrease in rates by dropping unlimited collection. The New Cumberland example was that cost stayed about even. Different rates will be cited if the bid is structured for different options. Ed concluded by saying that if [Mechanicsburg] wants to drive up recycling it should get rid of unlimited collection.

The committee was next addressed by Lee Ann Beck of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council. Lee Ann offered her assistance to the Borough in forming an Environmental Council on its own or with other jurisdictions.