

Borough of Mechanicsburg
Citizens Advisory Recycling Committee Meeting
August 2, 2004, 6 PM

The following people were in attendance:

Councilmen: McDermott, Ryder, Seagrist.

Citizens Recycling Advisory Committee members: Diane Hollinger, Carl Hursh, CeCe Viti.

Borough Staff: Glenda Boyer

The Committee discussed results from the Borough's recycling survey, the Penn Waste offer to extend its current contract with the Borough, recycling education needs and public recycling containers for downtown Mechanicsburg.

Recycling survey results:

Glenda revealed that in addition to the 549 survey returns, additional questionnaires had been submitted as residents came into the office to pay sewer/refuse bills. She will close the survey effective August 3 and add the new responses to the survey results. Preliminary survey results include:

- Responses were evenly split on the question of whether foods scraps should be permitted to be included in backyard composting bins. This question drew more comments than any other question.
- More than half of the respondents indicated they use plastic bags for the set out of waste. Of these, 71, or more than 25 percent, use only one bag per week. Two respondents using one bag/week use the bag to line their trash can.
- Respondents are generally not aware of the Borough's cardboard recycling bin or don't think they have enough cardboard to make the effort to drive to the bin.
- Most respondents use bulky waste collection service only once/year or a few times/year. A few respondents use it weekly or monthly and some respondents never use the service. (Under the Penn Waste one-bag collection option, residents using that option would need to affix a \$3.50 bag to any bulky waste requiring pick-up).

Penn Waste offer to extend the current contract:

Penn Waste's offer to extend the current waste and recycling contract was compared to its Silver Spring Township offer. Silver Spring residents will see a cost increase for waste and recycling service and the Township has accepted inclusion of the Penn Waste one-bag service option for residents who will buy a minimum of 24 bags/year. Mechanicsburg was offered the same one-bag option but with no additional cost for waste and recycling collection. It was confirmed that the Borough's current contract with Penn Waste permits one two-year

extension and that the terms of the current contract do not allow for establishing a limit on the number of containers/bags that can be set out weekly.

The Committee discussed the need for curbside collection of corrugated cardboard in addition to the drop-off container service. The Borough may consider locating a second drop-off bin. Glenda said that the drop-off container use is increasing and it needs to be pulled more frequently. In addition, office paper can be placed in the cardboard drop-off bin through a doorway at the end of the container. The drop-off service is provided by Penn Waste at no cost to the Borough, and the Borough receives no return for the value of the materials. The Borough receives records on the quantity of materials collected by the drop-off container, and the Borough adds those amounts to the quantity of curbside recycling in its application for the DEP recycling performance grant. Penn Waste has offered to collect corrugated cardboard at curbside only if it is broken down and sized, or cut, into pieces that are no larger than the dimensions of the Borough's recycling bins and if does not include plastic packing materials. The Committee felt that the Borough should accept the Penn Waste offer for curbside collection of cardboard.

Recycling education:

The Committee agreed that additional recycling education is needed whether or not the Penn Waste contract extension offer is accepted by Borough Council or changes are made to the waste and recycling service. The Committee discussed the possibility of using door-to-door distribution of the Borough's curbside recycling bin sticker as a reminder of what materials can be placed in the bins and how they should be prepared. Other printed materials could be distributed with the stickers to explain how cardboard can be recycled or details on the one-bag service, if these changes are accepted by Council. The possibility of distributing samples of the Penn Waste orange bag for one-bag collection service was discussed as a way to introduce residents to the one-bag option and to demonstrate the size of the bag. This could be costly since the Penn Waste cost for the one-bag service is \$3.50/bag.

The committee briefly discussed concerns expressed in some of the survey returns about animals/crows getting into plastic waste bags. This could be minimized if people were educated to use the bags to line trash cans. Placing the bags within trash cans would allow residents to accumulate more than one week worth of trash.

Concerning the task of door-to-door education, John McDermott said that 16 hours are required for the door-to-door distribution of the Keeping In Touch newsletter to 1,500 homes. Glenda said that apartment units that rely on dumpster collection would not need to be covered in a door-to-door canvassing. The committee felt that volunteers could be secured to canvas, but an individual would be needed to coordinate assignments.

Education efforts should also include reminders for business. It was suggested that a presentation on the Borough's recycling program could be made to senior citizens as part of the monthly crime watch meeting at the Seniors Center.

Carl Hursh informed the Council members present that the Citizen Recycling Advisory Committee intends to recommend to Council that a portion of the Borough's annual recycling performance grant proceeds be dedicated to a budget for recycling education, since improving the recycling education program should lead to improvements in the amount of materials recycled and thus increased performance grant funding.

Public recycling containers:

Glenda said that the Borough has applied for recycling grant funding for recycling bins to be located in the downtown area. Carl cautioned that recycling grant funds are tight and that approval of funding for the containers would only be considered if there was a clear plan for how the containers would be managed. Recycling containers should be clearly marked, have restricted openings and should be co-located with trash containers. Glenda said that combination waste and recycling containers are envisioned. It was also stated that disposal of household trash in the existing sidewalk trash containers has been a problem.