

Memorandum

To: Solid Waste Advisory Board

From: Gayle Wilson, Solid Waste Management Director

Subject: Information on Town of Chapel Hill proposed pilot programs for commercial and multifamily recycling

Date: November 19, 2001

This memorandum provides some background and technical information on each of the four proposed recycling/waste reduction pilot programs targeted at the multifamily and commercial sectors in Chapel Hill.

1. Pilot mixed paper collection at one or two multifamily sites and a commercial site.

Currently, the Solid Waste Department does not collect mixed paper at any private sites, but only from the ten recycling drop-off sites and the main Post Office at a rate of about 70 tons per month. A pilot program to determine the amount of mixed paper that could be diverted from both multifamily and commercial sites would be worthwhile. The Solid Waste Department could efficiently add up to three dumpsters for mixed paper on its current weekly route, however following conclusion of the pilot now proposed to last through June 30, 2002, the Department could not guarantee continuation of collection from these three stops.

The Solid Waste Department has dumpsters, truck and labor time available for the collection of additional mixed paper if integrated into current routes. The Department is also prepared to invest the significant staff effort required Town staff, at both the multifamily and commercial location for public education, waste audits, dumpster siting and ongoing service. The Department is not able to pay for dumpster pad construction nor screening nor participate in any modifications of zoning permits that might be required to accommodate the new dumpsters for mixed paper.

The pilot program would have to be coordinated with Town Solid Waste Services Division and the Planning Department to ensure that the mixed paper containers are satisfactorily located and that the Department complies with planning regulations such as dumpster screening and accessibility. The Town would need to provide a month of baseline waste collection tonnage and frequency data from the sites targeted in this effort prior to implementation, so that progress could be measured once the program is in place.

3. Provide a waste audit at a targeted commercial office complex.

The Department would provide a waste audit and follow-up report at the same commercial complex that was targeted for mixed paper collection, before implementation of the mixed paper collection program and other waste reduction efforts. The audit would be conducted by Orange Community Recycling staff and would be followed by a report and presentation to the building manager, owner and tenants describing how an effective paper recycling program and waste reduction program would best be implemented and other techniques for waste reduction. The Department could provide up to fifty deskside recycling containers.

Other indoor containers to agglomerate paper from the deskside containers would have to be provided by the building owner or management. The building staff would have to be involved in transferring the collected separated paper and any other recyclables to the centralized collection point from where the Department would handle them. Department personnel would not collect from internal points in the building.

The Town would need to measure one month of waste tonnage and frequency of collection prior to the audit and at the end of the pilot program.

4. Create pilot program for commercial food waste, can and bottle collection programs:

The Department successfully operates a program for collection of cans and bottles from 65 sites serving over one hundred businesses. Eighty percent are in Chapel Hill. Five have been added in the past two months. We are now at our budgetary maximum for this program. We do not plan to request additional funding this year to expand further. We also believe we already have sufficient collection data to provide the Town with a reasonable estimate of what to expect from implementing a can and bottle collection program at any given type of restaurant or bar. Thus it is the Department's opinion that there is no substantial information to be gained from a pilot program in this area.

The food waste collection program serves 15 business locations, eighty-eight percent of which are in Chapel Hill. The program collects over 65 tons of food waste per month and is at its budgetary maximum for this year. Most of the restaurants and institutions in Orange County generating the two-ton minimum per month and desiring to be on the program are on it now. If sites can be identified, further program expansion during the current fiscal year specifically targeted at Chapel Hill, could be undertaken at the Town's expense at a cost of approximately \$150 per site per month for a two ton minimum; cost per site would increase if tonnage were greater than the minimum. While the Town could experience direct benefits of tipping fee diversion and the business operator could possibly lower his disposal operating costs, neither the Department nor the Town would gain any additional information that is normally expected when instituting a pilot program. Of course, any savings would be temporary and probably cease upon the conclusion of the pilot program.

The Department would require a guarantee from the Town to pay for the landfill disposal of any contaminated loads of paper from this pilot project. The targeted commercial complex would need to be responsible for moving the recyclable paper from the interior of the building to the collection dumpster. Solid Waste staff would work with the building owner or manager to design an effective program and provide up to fifty indoor deskside containers to expedite the program.

All the parties could benefit from this pilot project. The Town would pay for fewer tons of waste disposed. The Solid Waste Department could learn about the practical potential for waste diversion from adding mixed paper to the current mix of recycling services and the waste generators could potentially save money by waste diversion thus requiring a lower weekly frequency of waste collection.

2. Expand current recycling program at a select multifamily complex.

Funds remain in the current year Solid Waste Management budget to expand the recycling services at a currently participating multifamily complex. The staff recommends selection of a single complex of at least 150 units with minimum recycling currently in place for program expansion. We prefer to implement the expansion at the same complex or complexes selected for the mixed paper expansion described in item 1, above. The combined approach would enable the Town and the Department to determine the maximum diversion possible, given current markets and collection approaches. About 20% of the current multifamily waste stream is readily recyclable in the current program with another 14% estimated to be mixed paper.

Most multifamily complexes that now have recycling have limited the number of sites due to space constraints or other on-site needs of the complex. There are far fewer recycling sites than dumpsters at most complexes. The complex selected for this pilot project would have to commit to provision and maintenance of additional recycling sites adjacent to the existing waste dumpsters that don't now have recycling containers nearby. The Department believes the more convenient and visible recycling at more locations could improve recycling rates. The Department is not able to provide funds for site improvements such as screening, grading or pouring concrete to accommodate additional carts.

In addition, Orange Community Recycling would work with the selected complex to provide intensive tenant education about the available recycling programs both on and off site. Education could include not only recycling, but also waste reduction through promoting concepts such as reusable goods and buying in bulk to reduce packaging wastes. The Department may be able to provide indoor containers to tenants to enhance recycling participation.

As with the mixed paper pilot above, the Town would need to provide data on waste tonnage and collection frequency both before and after the program was initiated to help gauge program success.

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Further program expansion would require additional funds. Even if the Board of County Commissioners were to authorize additional County funds for program expansion, the expansion would likely be in response to requests from businesses throughout the county and sites added according to the logistical requirements of the program. Thus further expansion using County funds might or might not be solely within the Town of Chapel Hill.

We note that over 80% of the businesses participating in the glass program and 88% of those receiving food waste collection are within Chapel Hill Town limits. (See 6/25/01 memo to Town commercial solid waste task force) The current diversion level for the Town, on a pro-rated basis, would then be 80% of the glass or 384 tons per year (where total program collection is about 480 tons per year) and 88% of the food or 690 tons per year. Projected annual value to the Town of avoided tipping fees due to these two programs for FY 2001-02 exceeds \$47,000.

We are grateful for the opportunity to evaluate the Town's proposal and offer our recommendations. At this time Solid Waste Staff are not prepared to propose the FY 2001/02 Solid Waste Management budget be amended to increase funding for expansion of commercial recycling services. Reduction of commercial sector waste is an integral part of achieving the County-wide waste reduction goals and is the primary collection focus of the adopted Solid Waste Management Plan. The value in these proposed pilot projects may be significant not only to the Town and the generators of waste in their immediate desire to reduce their waste management costs, but also County-wide in determining the potential and costs of expanding waste reduction and recycling efforts County wide.

Please let us know if you need anything further.