

TRASH MANAGEMENT – Future Actions and Considerations

There is a lot of community concerns regarding the future of trash pickup, recycling and future management of the landfill in Tiverton. The following is an attempt to lay out the facts as to current status, expectations after November 30th as well as potential future options.

It is a well-known fact that the Tiverton's municipal landfill will close on November 30, 2022. Trash and recycling will no longer be accepted at the current facility behind Town Farm after that date. Yard waste will not be accepted at the landfill after October 31, 2022. The only option allowable after November 30th for the Town of Tiverton is curbside trash collection that will be to deliver it to the central landfill in Johnston, RI which is operated by the Resource Recovery Corporation. This is a requirement of state law. We already send all of our recycling to Johnston and have done so for many years. There are other options for individuals, such as private dumpster use or transporting your own trash to a licensed facility that allows trash to be collected.

The RI Central Landfill is a state quasi-public agency regulated by state law. They set their own rules and regulations as well as operational policies. They determine the annual fee structures. They also determine the “cap” for how much trash (Municipal Solid Waste - MSW) any city or town may deliver and they determine the amount of expected recycling. The amount of trash for each community is based on population. The amount of recycling is expressed as a percentage of total trash generated by a municipality.

All trash (MSW) that is delivered to the central landfill is weighed and inspected. The weight is applied to the total trash cap allowed to a city or town and the cost of disposal, the tipping fee, is based on the weight. The current charge per ton is \$54.00 per ton. There is no charge for acceptable recyclables. Tiverton's current cap for trash is 5,439 tons.

It is very important that everyone not only recycles, but also doesn't put unacceptable items into the recycling as there are significant penalties the town will incur. Each load will be inspected upon arrival at the central landfill. If it is found to be unacceptably “contaminated” with any materials such as trash, plastic bags, shredded paper, etc., the entire load will be rejected and considered to be regular trash. The weight will then be assigned to the trash cap as well as incurring a penalty fee. The current penalty is \$250.00 per rejected load. Our current requirement is for a mandatory recycling rate of 25%. Our

actual rate is 19.6%. The state's goal is for all municipalities to achieve a 35% recycling level. There is currently a \$100.00 per ton penalty for exceeding a municipality's annual cap. Any action that increases the amount of allowable annual trash (MSW), such as rejected loads of recycling, will adversely affect the cap and cause the town a financial penalty. This will cause an unanticipated increase to the trash collection budgeted account which is why we are highlighting the issue of proper recycling to be a priority of town residents.

Our current costs for trash pickup and delivery to Johnston will increase the trash budget significantly. We will be paying for the mileage, time allocated to transportation to and from Johnston and tipping fees, all of which is not part of the current trash collection budget. We already pickup and deliver recycling to Johnston as has been the case for many years. At the present time we have no accurate idea of how many tons of trash we actually produce. By this time next year we will have a very accurate idea as each load will be weighed in Johnston. It has been estimated that our costs for all aspects of trash management will be in the range of \$1,500,000 to \$1,600,000 annually. This annual cost is expected to increase every year by the Resource Recovery Corporation's fee schedule.

Another area of concern is yard waste. We currently collect yard waste at our landfill with the DPW picking it up. This yard waste has been ground up and used for landfill cover for many years. Once the landfill closes we will no longer be able to provide this as a cover material for an active landfill. Yard waste may have to be collected and delivered, in one form or another, to Johnston at a significant additional cost. Another option may be to find a vendor willing to accept our yard waste for a fee. At present we have no vendor interested in accepting yard waste.

Starting in November 2022 we will need to operate and maintain a recycling center for specific items, such as cardboard, metals, glass, electronics, mattresses, tires and such. No different than what has been collected at the top of the landfill for decades. Once the landfill closes, we will no longer be allowed to operate a recycling center at the current landfill location. The plan is to construct a temporary recycling center within the industrial park between Longplex and the power plant. We will operate the new recycling center with either hired contractors or use of existing staff. It is unclear at this time what the net effect on the budget will be due to this shift in operations. We have enlisted an engineering consultant to design a more permanent recycling center that complies with all state regulations and RIDEM permitting to construct such a site. The cost of which is

approximately \$750,000.00 will be funded using casino revenue and some of the industrial park infrastructure funds. The infrastructure fund may only be used for road and utility work. The Town Council may consider the possibility of being able to use some of the ARPA funding. We have already cleared the temporary site that will be used until the final site is completed. This facility will operate similarly to the existing transfer station with a Very Important Difference – ABSOLUTELY NO TRASH will be able to be accepted. Once the landfill is closed we will no longer need to fund trash operations there but we will continue to fund annual monitoring of the environmental wells and continue to provide testing results to DEM. We currently engage an engineering firm to perform this task and make the required quarterly reports. This is an expense expected to be around \$200,000 per year based on current estimates.

The additional annual expense of curbside trash transported to Johnston, recycling center operation and continued landfill monitoring will need to be funded, most likely through taxation and continued bag fees. There have been conversations about doing away with the “bag fee”, as its original purpose was to provide funding for the landfill closure. Once the landfill is closed the bag fee will no longer be needed for landfill closure but it may continue as a user fee to offset the annual appropriation needed for the increased cost of trash collection and disposal. Also, another just as important consideration is the fact that the PAYT system greatly increases the use of recycling by residents. Most other communities in Rhode Island have a user fee of some sort, such as an annual fee or a bag fee, or a combination of both.

One final point or question that hasn't been resolved is what should the community do with the landfill after it is fully capped and decommissioned? The cap material is fairly robust and will allow some usage of the surface area. We cannot do anything that will disturb or penetrate the capping materials. There will naturally be some subsidence and settling over time and this will be closely monitored. One possibility would be to install a solar panel array on it which would be of benefit to the town. This and other options will require further study and analysis.

Should you want more information, please visit the RI Resource Recovery website or the Town of Tiverton website.