

Intermunicipal Relations Committee

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March 5, 2013

Taylor Township Supervisors
7217 Woodbury Pike
Roaring Spring, PA

Dear Supervisors:

Now that the dust has settled following the closure of the Blair County Department of Solid Waste and Recycling, we thought it would be a good time to provide an update to the county's municipal governing bodies.

The Intermunicipal Relations Committee (IRC), the council of governments which oversees recycling in the county's four mandated recycling municipalities, has assumed some of the county's solid waste, recycling and composting programs. Many of our efforts will still benefit those of you in non-mandated municipalities and we hope this letter will explain what all that means.

- What work have we continued?
- What recycling opportunities might still be available to you?
- What is the future of the county composting facilities and what does it mean to your municipality?
- How might your municipality become a partner with us to encourage recycling and provide for composting?

Special Programs

The IRC will continue several established programs.

- The annual Household Hazardous Waste collection will continue and some of those materials will also be accepted on a daily basis at our composting and recycling facility on the Buckhorn west of Altoona. We may be forced to charge a bit more to non-IRC residents.
- We also plan to continue to hold as many of our special collections as possible. In the past this has included holiday wrapping collections, tires, electronics, Christmas trees, and less common plastics that cannot be accepted as part of their regular curbside recycling collection.

Drop-Off Recycling

Though it is impossible for the IRC to provide direct funding for drop-off recycling, we are able to provide other support to explore and implement other options. Several municipalities have restored drop-off recycling in their communities and we have helped them with signage, education and technical assistance. We will provide whatever help we can, including pursuit of grant funding to provide initial capital funding for recycling drop-off facilities. We believe that these municipalities are models for other community efforts and we would be happy to meet with you or a group of neighboring municipalities to discuss how we can make this happen.

Four drop-off recycling programs have arisen from the cooperative efforts of area recyclers and municipalities, following four slightly different recipes. Waste haulers and recyclers have worked with the municipal sponsors in each case to provide for recycling that otherwise would not be possible. Most have embarked upon a multi-municipal effort and we would encourage such an approach. Whatever is the best fit for you, we would like to help you examine your options and facilitate recycling in your part of Blair County

Curbside Recycling

It may well be that the removal of the recycling containers could have an upside, allowing us to revisit other options and move forward in a coordinated fashion. Part of these considerations would be how curbside recycling fits into a coordinated county recycling plan. It raises some questions for all of us.

- Does it make sense to adopt curbside recycling ordinances throughout the more populated portion of the county (generally from Tyrone south to Newry)? Such an ordinance could take one of two forms.
 - An ordinance identical (or nearly identical) to the mandated recycling municipalities requiring recycling by all residents, businesses and institutions. Since most residents find recycling relatively painless and usually welcome recycling service, such an ordinance seems likely to be uncontroversial. If most people are recycling, this also reduces the cost per household since the collection trucks will be picking up more material per mile traveled.
 - As an alternative, an ordinance similar to existing ordinances in Antis, Blair and Snyder Townships that requires all haulers to recycle when residents or businesses choose to recycle. Residents would not be required to recycle but the hauler would when material is separated and placed out for recycling. Though participation would be lower and cost might be a bit higher (since collection stops would be further apart), residents and businesses would at least have the opportunity to recycle. Without the drop-off option, this is the only way that many people would have access to reasonably convenient recycling.
- One of our goals should be to make things as uniform as practical to facilitate uniform education and enforcement (if necessary), reducing confusion and increasing the likelihood that more people would participate in the recycling program. This might include:
 - Uniform recyclable materials
 - Standard rules for businesses, institutions and public events
 - Consistent regulations for haulers
 - Helpful regulations to
 - Reduce open burning
 - Assure everyone has waste collection service

As part of these discussions, we would also be happy to talk with any municipality or group of municipalities that would be interested in exploring other waste and recycling collections, including discussions of the pros and cons of contracted collection.

Composting Facilities

The IRC will continue operation of the two composting facilities – our primary facility on the Buckhorn and the Research and Development site south of Duncansville. The operation of the facilities will continue as they have through the spring and any municipality remains welcome to bring their separated leaf and yard waste to the facilities. Though the facilities bring in a significant amount of money in compost sales and tip fees charged on truck load quantities of yard waste, the operation of the facilities is still costly. Consequently, the IRC is requesting some sort of support from non-member municipalities in 2013.

IRC Membership

This support could be in the form of financial assistance or an in-kind contribution. If you would like to continue utilizing the facilities, we would be happy to talk about how we can do that. The following would be examples of the kind of support we hope you might consider providing.

- Operational assistance at the Duncansville facility, such as cutting the grass or moving the recycling trailer periodically.
- Sponsorship of a drop-off recycling center (such as Martinsburg and Williamsburg Boroughs, and Frankstown, Greenfield, Woodbury, Huston, and North Woodbury Townships are doing now).
- Passage of an ordinance requiring recycling by residents and businesses or requiring recycling by haulers if businesses or resident wish to recycle.
- A commitment to assist with periodic maintenance or repairs on our two compost facilities.
- Assistance at our special collection events.

- An outright financial contribution based on the population of your municipality if you would prefer that to any assistance described above.

We understand that many municipalities wish to continue utilizing the compost facilities or benefiting from our recycling programs. We hope that these various alternatives listed above will provide you with an option that you can afford. We believe this will give you access to valuable resources and programs while helping us to organize and provide those services. Otherwise, we may be forced to charge municipalities or their residents anything additional for those services. The IRC municipalities simply cannot afford to foot the bill for services provided outside their borders.

It is our goal to bring as many municipalities into the fold as possible. We envision two levels of association with the IRC.

- “Municipal Partners” would be any municipality that commits to one of the six sponsorships or assistance described above. We would also welcome additional full members in the IRC.
- Full membership would require that you pass ordinances nearly identical to the current members’ ordinances mandating waste collection and recycling.

Whichever level you believe best fits your municipality, we think that a number of municipalities would benefit from such a partnership or membership.

County Solid Waste Plan

Coincidentally, the update to our county solid waste management plan (which is required by state law every ten years) is currently being worked on. Though we are trying hard to maintain as much as we can, the loss of county funding is changing our waste management programs enough that we will be making “Substantial” changes to our plan. This requires input from you in the form of formal ratification. Once a plan draft is completed, you will be asked to comment on it and subsequently approve it. I or one of the members of the Blair County Solid Waste Advisory Committee will be attending one or several of your governing body meetings to present the plan and entertain questions related to it sometime in the spring.

Your response is important!

We have made great progress in Blair County over the last few years especially, recycling more, composting a great deal of yard waste and keeping those materials out of the landfill, burn barrel and illegal dumps. In the absence of the county funding that existed until recently, we believe that we can continue these successes with modest support from each of you. Though we must figure out how to pay for these services, we are committed to finding ways to continue as many of these things as possible at the most affordable price possible.

Please contact us as soon as practical to discuss these matters further with a representative of the municipality or to plan a visit to your governing body meeting. We would like to meet with municipalities in March and April, so please respond to us by March 25, 2013. Understanding what commitments municipalities can make is very important in our planning process, so please respond as soon as you are able.

Sincerely,

John Frederick
Executive Director