

In-house recycling to save city \$1M. over five years

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — After receiving notice of significant cost increases from recycling vendors, the city bought two trucks and hired employees to collect it themselves.

At an Oct. 30 Town Hall meeting, City Manager Neil Young said as of January 2019, Cape May's contract with Gold Medal Environmental had expired.

"When we went out for bids, the bids came in really high, three times as much as the prior year," he said.

Young said in discussions with the Public Works Department, it was discovered the city could collect recycling itself at less cost than bids received from haulers, which averaged \$500,000 per year.

The city's in-house recycling

costs peaked the first year due to the purchase of two \$200,000 recycling trucks for a total yearly recycling pickup cost of \$609,000. The lowest recycling bid from a vendor was \$548,000. However, for year two, the city's cost will be \$287,000 while a vendor contract would have totaled \$559,000, for a savings of \$272,000 to the city.

The savings for years two through five average \$280,000 annually, for a total savings of \$1 million over five years, according Young.

"We did that review. It was something that we said we had to do for the city. This is a huge benefit to take it on ourselves over the price the private contractors were offering," he said.

Young said the city now has better control of what items are recycled, which also offers better protection

of the environment. He said the city's recycling operation created four full-time jobs in an area that needs full-time employment.

Public Works Superintendent Joe Picard said recycling is collected five days a week. He asked if anyone in the audience had not received a violation sticker on their recycling container.

One sticker notes only grass and leaves are acceptable for collection, not branches. Another sticker notes if a resident's recycling is contaminated by trash or plastic bags. A sticker is issued for recycling containers measuring over 32 gallons in capacity.

"We figure about 15 percent of the property owners have the 48-, 60- or 98-gallon containers. Our ordinance says 32-gallon, and that's what we are going by," Picard said.

City recycling coordinator Pat D'Arco said changes are being implemented by the county Municipal Utilities Authority (MUA). She said the largest change was shredded paper and rigid plastics are no longer recyclable.

D'Arco said the MUA was proposing a \$200-per-ton charge for contaminated recyclables, with plastic bags as the worst culprit.

"We don't pay for recycling right now but we would end up paying \$1,500 a truckload for a contaminated load," she said.

Cape May City Elementary School won a countywide competition from the MUA that challenged local schools to collect plastic, including grocery and plastic bags, dry cleaning bags and plastic wrapping.

D'Arco said Cape May Elementary won the chal-

lenge despite being one of the smaller schools in the competition. The school was awarded a Trex bench and planter.

Students collected almost 476 pounds of plastic even though the school started three months late in the competition, she said. A new competition begins Nov. 15.

Cape May Public Works has collected 606 tons of cleaner recycling since the city began picking up recycling April 10, D'Arco said.

"I think that is a pretty staggering number and the county is very happy with us. In fact they are using us as an example, because we are being so proactive about cleaning up the recycling," she said.

Picard said the recycling route in summer on Mondays is an extreme exercise.

"It takes us two and half to three hours just to do the Washington Street Mall and I have two trucks on the road, and when they are done, they have to play catchup with the residential," he said.

Under consideration is a second pickup day just for the mall merchants, Picard said, adding that the Promenade from Ocean Street to Howard Street is a Tuesday pickup.

"We want to incorporate that into Monday, clean up the town first thing before the week starts," Picard said.

The proposal will be discussed with mall merchants and City Council, he said.

Jetties may be too short to be effective

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tendent Joe Picard said the groins most likely were built to the size of the beaches many years ago. Rife said the width of the beaches has changed over the years.

The Army Corps places the bulk of sand during replenishment on a feeder beach at the Coast Guard base, which is supposed to feed the city's other beaches via sand migration.

"How do we know where the sand goes?" Rife asked.

Consultant Chad DeSatnick said sand is accumulating on the east side of each of the groins. He noted the Cold Spring Inlet jetties prevent Cape May from receiving sand from beaches to the north.

"I've always said the longest jetty should be the cove," Chad DeSatnick said.

He said no beach existed at the east end of Cape May when he was a child and questioned why the shortest jetty is located off Broadway beach. He suggested having a jetty that tilted to the southeast.

In Belmar, interior sections of jetties were removed to allow sand to pass through, Chad DeSatnick said.

Dennis DeSatnick suggested the city contact the Army Corps to conduct a study on altering the jetties. The ultimate goal is for the Army Corps to create a demonstration beach project in Cape May to see its effect on the beach slope.

Pumping sand from Lower Township, on the other side of Cape May Inlet, is complicated by its ownership by the state Division of Fish and Wildlife and nesting piping plovers at Two Mile Beach, he said, adding that he was unsure whether the city had contacted the Division of

Fish and Wildlife to see if that situation were still in place.

Consultant Jeff Martin said Two Mile Beach is critical habitat for the black skimmer, least tern and piping plover. A future meeting with the city and Army Corps is planned, Dennis DeSatnick said. Martin said if a large jetty were placed at the cove, it would most likely cause the neighboring Nature Conservancy beach to shrink.

The Hatch Mott MacDonald study stated it was strictly engineering-based with no implied or actual health/medical recommendations. Chad DeSatnick noted the Beach Safety Committee has a physician on the committee, Dr. Andrea McCoy, chief medical officer of Cape Regional Medical Center, who stated Cape May leads the area in back and neck

injuries in the surf zone.

Rife said other towns have had more injuries from other circumstances. Dennis DeSatnick said McCoy's report on 2018 surf zone injuries was presented to the Army Corps and DEP.

"When we showed them that report, it was no longer anecdotal. Those were the facts, and that opened their eyes," he said. "The Army Corps is cooperative, the DEP is cooperative, Congressman Van Drew is cooperative."

Dennis DeSatnick said Myrtle Beach, S.C., asked the Army Corps for a re-evaluation of its shore protection project.

"That's basically what we need here," he said.

Martin said his marine science students at Lower Cape May Regional High School have been taking beach slope measurements

of two Cape May beaches for seven months. An unofficial measurement of the Pittsburgh Avenue beach from one month shows a sharp drop-off, he said.

By the end of the year, the committee will have 22 beach profiles, Martin said.

At its Nov. 25 meeting, the committee will review the Hatch Mott McDonald study with members of City Council and the administration.

Martin said Cape May has not had sand bars in 30 years. He theorized sand bars that were once located a quarter-mile offshore wound up on the beach during sand renourishment. Martin said the ocean is getting deeper.

"It's 6 inches deeper than it was 30 years ago," he said. "It's expected to get 18 inches deeper in the next 30 years."



THE LOWER TOWNSHIP CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

will hold its (Thursday) November 14th Luncheon at VINCENZO'S Little Italy Restaurant in North Cape May at 12:30 p.m./12:00 networking.

Guest speakers for this event will be Krista FitzSimons, Program Coordinator/Planner and Rachel Santo, Director of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). They will be speaking about volunteer opportunities as well as the Free Income Tax preparation program offered through their department of the Cape May County Division of Aging & Disability Services.

Since it is Veteran's Day (week), we welcome our veterans to attend this meeting to network with our members and be recognized for their service.

Please call the Chamber Office @ 609-886-5281 for reservations and lunch choice. You can pay by credit card or at the door. Checks are accepted. Cost of lunch is \$25.00 per person.

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