



CITY COUNCIL UPDATE

March 1st, 2024

1) RECENT ACTIVITY

- a) Approximately 1,250 citizens have signed the petition to bring back curbside recycling.
- b) In the last two weeks, there have been no reports of city workers removing materials from the drop-off bins. We are pleased to see that materials are not being removed and processed as “trash,” however the bins are overflowing during weekends, and citizens are not able to deposit their recyclables.
- c) Recyclable materials are still being mixed into one truck. Cardboard is not collected separately, but we’ve since learned that there’s no provision in the contract to ensure cardboard is collected separately.
- d) In the last two weeks, recycling materials have been tracked to RDS. From there, it is not certain where the materials are going. We are continuing to monitor the tracking devices.

2) POINTS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

- a) Chesapeake Recycles is not affiliated with any recycling or waste disposal company, and we are not advocating for any specific company. We are advocating for the return of curbside recycling which is the most efficient means of recycling.
- b) Chesapeake Recycles does not oppose RePower (or another similar processor) coming to Chesapeake. As of June 30th, 2024, the Wheelabrator waste-to-energy plant will close, and nearly 700,000 tons of waste will go to the landfill – that’s the equivalent of one Mount Trashmore per year. We need an alternative to the landfill, and RePower offers a possible solution.

HOWEVER, RePower says they are only recycling 12 – 15% out of the Berkeley County facility. The national average is 33%, and Virginia mandates that 25% of our waste be recycled. We don’t believe it’s possible to achieve a 25% recycle rate with a one-bin collection system. With a one-bin collection system, recyclables are mixed with residential waste (food, pet waste, dirty diapers, compostable items, etc.) and recycling is a “byproduct” of the process as very little material is returned to the manufacturing stream. It is not recycling “with intent,” and it puts more demand on natural resources (trees for cardboard and paper; petroleum for plastics).

- c) Even if RePower (or another similar processor) can be operational within 18 months, we are under contract with SPSA until 06.30.2027. So, it’s misleading the public to say “we are pursuing an expedited option for a one-bin solution.”
- d) Total Fiber Recovery of Chesapeake (TFRC) is scheduled to open in the next month or so. Both the City and the State have committed significant revenue to ensure the success of this company (\$400K). TFRC needs roughly 300,000 tons of clean and baled, mixed paper and cardboard to be successful. They cannot accept paper / cardboard that has been collected in a one-bin system.

- e) In the last two weeks SPSA has given updates to Virginia Beach City Council and Norfolk City Council. They report that the RFP responses are due May 1st, 2024, and they won't likely award a contract until May of 2025. They expect that each locality participating will need to commit for 20+ years, and the cost to be somewhere around \$700 million.
- f) When curbside was discontinued and the drop-off sites were created, the city did not put the contract out to bid. Instead, the city modified an existing "TRASH" disposal contract with GFL. The only modification made to the contract is dated July 8, 2022 to add the language "materials collected from recycling bins must be transported to a qualified recycling center."

The GFL contract was not modified to add these sites:

- 1) South Norfolk: Dept of Human Services, 100 Outlaw St
- 2) Hickory: 168 Toll Plaza Rd
- 3) Deep Creek Park

Nor, was the contract modified to include additional bins, collection times, and measures for ensuring the cardboard bins are collected separately from the mixed recycling bins.

As a result, the bins are frequently overflowing and sorted materials are being mixed into one truck.

- g) Council Members have stated that even if we could find a way to fund the return of curbside, we would need to invest in new carts, and it would take 18 months to implement. In the Virginia Beach RFP, both bidders agreed to reuse the existing carts. And, both bidders have said they could be operational in only a few months. We urge you to find a way to restore the curbside recycling program until a proven, viable long-term solution is available. The City logged a record \$160M in "excess revenue" last year. Why not put a portion in a lockbox to fund recycling for the next three years to give you time to find a viable long-term solution? We realize the excess funds are "earmarked" for capital projects, but recycling is clearly a priority for the community.

3) **CITIZEN EDUCATION**

When the curbside recycling program was operational, 25% of what went into the blue bins was contaminated. And, according to the EPA, 75% of what is disposed of as trash is recyclable.

With citizen education programming, we can reduce contamination in the recycling stream, while also increasing the recycling rate.

We suggest:

- Feature a slide at the beginning of every Work Session;
- Post regular reminders on social media;
- Not all bins have the "no plastic bags of any kind" notice. Invest in stickers;
- Send a reminder insert in tax bills and notices. A simple insert would not add more to the postage.

In November 2023, HRPDC received a grant for nearly \$2 million to help with recycling education.

As a non-profit organization, we can also help the city pursue grant opportunities for citizen education.

For more information, visit our website at: ChesapeakeRecycles.com

Feel free to contact us with any questions or to request a meeting: hello@chesapeakecycles.com

Respectfully,

Lacy Shirey and Dawn Matheson, Co-Founders

QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL

Related to the Drop-Off Sites

Submitted 02.20.2024

1. We have several videos showing city workers removing sorted recyclable materials (not residual / contaminated items) from the drop-off bins, and combining them into trash trucks. Why is this happening?
[Click here](#) to see a video.
2. Why is GFL dumping multiple bins, cardboard and mixed recycling, into one truck—mixing already sorted materials?
[Click here](#) to see a video.
3. Where are the materials ending up? On Thursday, February 15th, a supporter visited RDS and there were no bales or evidence of recycling plastic, aluminum, steel bottles or cans on the property. Even if GFL is delivering the materials to RDS, there is reason to believe that they are still landfilled.
4. How are we helping Total Fiber Recovery (TFR) acquire our cardboard and other paper items? TFR is a valued corporate partner for the City of Chesapeake. They provide valuable jobs and significant tax revenues for the city.
5. Does the GFL contract specify how often the bins are to be emptied, how the materials are to be collected, and where the materials are to be sent?
6. Or, does GFL make the determination on how to collect the materials, where the materials go, and if the bins are contaminated?
7. Why are tracking devices ending up in the landfill?
8. What is our actual cost of managing the drop-off sites? City workers empty the bins TWICE on Sunday. It takes them roughly 30 – 45 minutes at each site. Is overtime involved? Also, they are not emptying bins with equipment. Rather, they are jumping in the containers and tossing out materials by hand. This is a significant safety concern.
9. The City reports recycling 3,000 tons. What is the cost of sending the other 11,000 tons of recycling to the landfill?
10. What is the full cost to the city to collect residential waste, and how many tons are collected? Please provide this data for the past three years.
11. In 2023, the [City Financial Statement](#) shows “an excess” of \$160M (see the attached pdf). Why can’t a portion of those revenues be used to restore the curbside program and fund a Citizen Recycling Education program?

QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL

Related to a One-Bin Solution

Submitted 03.01.2024

1. What tonnage is needed for RePower (or another processor) to be successful here, and can Chesapeake provide enough material on its own?
2. What will the cost / ton be? And, how does it compare to what we are currently paying for waste disposal?
3. Will RePower (or another processor) manage the collection and processing or just the processing?
4. Will SPSA permit us to exit out of our current contract which doesn't expire until 2027? If so, what is the penalty to exit?
5. What is the cost to the City to bring RePower (or another processor) to Chesapeake? In Berkeley County, they used a public-private partnership model, and the county is currently trying to collect \$8M in payments.
6. Will RePower (or another processor) be seeking an EDIP grant from the City?
7. What is the timeframe involved for RePower (or another processor) to be operational in Chesapeake?
8. What percentage of material can we expect to be recycled? RePower officials state that in Berkeley County, they are recycling 12 – 15%. The national average is 33%, and Virginia mandates that we recycle 25%.