



“LANDFILLED” DISCUSSION SERIES

PUBLIC FEEDBACK

Date: May 19, 2008

Time: 6:30-8 p.m.

Location: Pleasant Hill

Facilitator: Steve McCue

Recorder: Stephanie Williams

Other observers: none

Number of participants: 9

What actions should we be taking now to reduce trash?

- Raise awareness.
- We could do curbside, but it would have to be a contract. That would lead to more participation, but we would become the “bad guy” because we’d be telling people what to do.
- The cost of preparing the bills would comp curbside recycling, so people wouldn’t have to pay for it.
- If every town recycled, there would be a lot less waste.
- We need to recycle to use less space [in landfills].
- Kansas City, Mo., limits bags. Most people won’t recycle until they’re forced because it’s a bother.

Do you know where your trash goes or how much you are charged?

- Know the value, but not where it goes.
- I would be concerned if the cost went up significantly, but I didn’t receive any extra services.
- The monthly bill for landfill space should be shared by the community. Sometimes I have more, and sometimes you have more, but that’s OK.
- We need to limit the number of bags people have; it’s the only fair way. An average number of trash bags [per area] would have to be figured out so it wouldn’t be a burden for people.
- People need to feel that they’re paying a fair share.
- If recycling lowered what you pay in trash costs, more people would do it.

How would you feel about having a landfill near your home?

- We already have a power plant and a sewer plant going in in our area; we don’t need a landfill as well.
- Recycling would increase if it would prevent a landfill near our community.

Imagine there is no operating landfill left in the Kansas City area. What issues would arise?

- Trash would build up. The cost of disposal would go up because of the increased travel distance.
- Odor, insects, disease.

What is your main motivation for recycling?

- Grandkids.
- Benefits all the way around.
- At the monthly drop off, there’s no glass.
- The city needs to pressure Deffenbaugh to take glass.
- Recycled glass can be used for all sorts of things, like “glassphalt” and countertops.

- At the monthly drop off, they usually get about 250 cars out of 3,000 households. The tonnage is impressive; the participation rate is not.

How would your behavior change if there was no landfill?

- I'd buy property with land with space to dump my trash.
- I'd buy items with less packaging or reuse things more.

What other ways have you changed your habits to be more environmentally friendly?

Use CFLs, unplug appliances when I'm not around — but the cost of electricity is more of a motive for this. I have to change the bulbs less often.

Who is responsible for reducing trash?

- EPA
- Everyone
- Manufacturers and retailers: require smart packaging and eco-friendly services.

Do you feel you know enough about what can be kept out of the trash?

- Cans (tin), plastic (but it's hard to tell what types can be recycled)
- Use Bridging the Gap, MARC and the city as sources of information.

What interest do communities and individuals have in reducing trash?

- It's a societal problem. The "no landfill" scenario is just an exercise now, but it could be a real problem in the future.
- We need more information on what can and can't be recycled.
- I would compost without a landfill. The only problem is that shredding up leaves for the yard burns up gas.

What is the most inconvenient thing about recycling?

- My wife causes me to recycle, but laziness stops me.
- It's hard to tell what materials can't be recycled.
- Products made out of sustainable materials are too costly.
- *Side comment:* Our drop-off center pays for a site manager, and then donates the rest of its earnings to charity.
- The trash piles up [in my home]. I have to put it out of sight.
- Paper is easy to get rid of at schools, but the kids hardly receive any money for the community's efforts. The schools have to get a certain amount to make it count at all.
- I hate having to clean out the items ... but it becomes habit after a while.*
- Storage is an issue.*
- Transporting the items to a drop-off center can be hard.

What lessons are your children learning in school?

- "Clean it up."
- Save pop tabs.
- I think kids are being taught [to recycle] at school.
- Recycling is going to be a generational thing. The more we do it, the more they'll do it.
- Recycling in the '70s never did anything. Why didn't it work then?
- *Response:* Then it was tree-huggers, now it's business.
- There's progress being made, but we need more new ideas.
- Technology will help. There's one area where the methane from a landfill fuels a power plant, which heats a correctional facility.
- We feel a responsibility to change because of climate change, but we don't really know what to do.
- A lot of things are on an individual scope.
- Some of the solutions are too costly.

- Light rail, hydrogen cars ... we couldn't create or market these things. We're willing to participate, but we can't create [the technology or make it available to the public].

Do your children recycle at school?

- My kids are better about it than I am.
- They get into a routine, and it becomes habit. (Younger kids especially.)
- Kids think of saving the Earth. Adults think of costs.
- Kids think of the higher good. They have the time to do that!
- "Chucking it away" is faster and easier when you have so much to do.
- Kids have hope.
- Gas prices were high in the '70s, but very little has changed [our dependence on gasoline].

Is recycling important?

Yes, and it will become more important.

Should people be rewarded for recycling?

- Saving the planet is our reward.
- Charging per trash bag would be an incentive to recycle.
- But people might start throwing stuff in ditches.
- It shouldn't be necessary to reward people, but in reality it probably is.
- Could we give people a voucher card based on how much they recycle?
- If people get money from the process, they'll be more likely to do it.
- Participation will increase a little, but until you pay people, it will never be that much.
- What does Europe do? (Italy uses the mafia.)
- The recycle bin could record how much you recycle, and give you a return accordingly.
- Kansas City, Mo., limits bags [of trash].
- Some people would rather just buy a compactor or more bags.
- The estimate of the average number of bags must be accurate. You need to get a baseline for how much people dispose. There should be a national study that gives a baseline.
- Government will have to do it. Show a recycling bin outside of the White House in ads.
- Take stock of who doesn't use the bin and assess a fine.
- Less bags equals more recycling!
- There comes a point when people will turn against you [if you mandate it]. "I can still buy bags" gives people the choice.
- Limits on trash bags could increase illegal dumping.
- People will start to use public/private dumpsters for disposal.
- There needs to be *some kind of* punishment/reward system.

Should landlords be responsible for providing recycling services to renters?

- There should be two dumpsters, one for trash and one for recycling.
- They should make it mandatory at complexes.

Should people be able to choose their own hauler?

- Having the city contract with only one hauler means we would be able to have recycling, but people here want to choose.
- The city should push trash haulers to a higher level. They should be required to offer recycling. Homeowners should be able to separate their items.
- Who picks it up doesn't matter as long as they pick it up; reliability is key.
- We need to have a statistically valid survey that asks people about recycling and choice of hauler.

What does the ideal recycling system look like for you?

- The bins would all be together in one place.
- One bin—"they" sort.

- Mine would look like a trash bin. Everything goes in one container, both trash and recycling, and they sort it out.
- The one that people will use!
- It grinds up metal, and a magnet pulls it out with aluminum cans.
- We can solve recycling in the next 10 years; it's just about convincing people.
- Education.
- Weekly pick-up.
- Something to keep critters out.
- Availability at apartments.
- Need to be careful when selecting a container size because it might not fit in car.
- The desires will vary for each person, so it's hard to say.
- If people didn't throw crap in the recycling containers, it wouldn't matter as much.
- The ideal situation would be that the trash haulers make enough off of recycling so nobody would have to pay them to do it.
- You could use people who need community service hours to sort the items.

Who should be a leader on this issue?

- The mayor.
- Everybody.
- Bridging the Gap and MARC, but they can't regulate.
- Pleasant Hill recycling committee.
- Business owners, such as the owners of Pleasant Hill Bank.
- Principals, teachers.
- This conversation has made me a little more motivated to recycle and a little more interested in this topic.