

**Portsmouth Curbside Collection Request for Proposal  
White Paper**

# INTRODUCTION

The Town Council directed the staff to work with our waste consultant to develop a hybrid waste management option to develop into a Request for Proposal (RFP). The Council directed the hybrid RFP should include: 1) curbside collection for the residents of the entire Town, 2) elimination of pay-as-you-throw bags, and 3) utilization of the Transfer Station for bulky waste and diversion materials.

## HYBRID OPTIONS – CURBSIDE COLLECTION & TRANSFER STATION FOR BULKY WASTE & DIVERSIONS

Key staff members held a meeting with our waste consultant to discuss the Council’s request. Following are the resulting points made during the meeting for the Council’s review and comments.

### CURBSIDE COLLECTION

1. **Curbside collection:** The Town expects to issue an RFP for a townwide residential curbside collection program to include Municipal Solid Waste (MSW), Mixed Recycling, Leaf and Yard Debris (L&Y) and bulky items. The RFP will include limited Hedly Street Transfer Station operations to allow residents to use the Transfer Station to dispose of bulky items and diversions of other recyclables not collected at the curb. Diversion materials are any recyclable materials diverted from disposal in the landfill. Diversions at the Transfer Station include the items listed on the table under 3., page 5, except for bulky waste.
  - Assumption: It would be less costly for residents to use the Transfer Station to dispose of bulky waste compared to the curbside collection option for bulky waste because they are delivering the waste to the Transfer Station where it is being consolidated into large loads for transport to RIRRC.
  - Residents utilizing the Transfer Station to dispose of bulky waste or diversions would likely purchase a sticker or pass from a recycling coordinator at the Tax Office and affix the sticker to the bulky item/diversion or turn in the pass at the Transfer Station in order for the contractor to verify payment and allow disposal.
  - Residents unable to transport bulky waste, or who prefer not to do so, have the option of utilizing curbside collection of bulky waste from the contractor. In that instance, the resident contacts the contractor to pick up the bulky waste item curbside for a fixed fee.
2. **Leaf and Yard Debris (L&Y) collection:** There are three L&Y options for the Council to consider. When doing so, it is important to keep in mind the Town exceeds its allowance (the “Cap”) each year, but has been able to “borrow” tonnage from other towns without L&Y collection. Nevertheless, the Town still uses most of this combined allotment with only a portion of households historically utilizing the Transfer Station.

Calendar Year	L&Y Cap	Tons Borrowed	Total Allotment	Tons L&Y Disposed	Tons Over (Under)	# of Full Year Stickers Sold	% of 7,000 HH	Avg. tons of L&Y per HH	Estimate of tons for 7,200 HH
2020	435	218	653	679	26	2,553	36%	.2660	
2021	436	218	654	611	(43)	2,372	34%	.2576	
2022	437	218	655	519	(136)	2,284	33%	.2272	1,635.84

In the table above, L&Y disposal tonnage indicates a downward trend at the Transfer Station in calendar year 2022. In order to **project** the amount of L&Y that might be disposed of by 7,200 households, we

looked at the total tons of L&Y disposed of in 2022 and divided it by the number of full year stickers sold, getting an average of .2272 tons per household for the year ( $519 / 2284 = .2272$ ). We then multiplied the average tons disposed per household in 2022 by 7,200 households ( $.2272 \times 7,200 = 1,635.84$ ). Using this formula, we can estimate 7,200 households might dispose of approximately 1,636 tons of L&Y in a year. Although RIRRC does not charge municipalities to dispose of L&Y tonnage up to the Town's "Total Cap" (which includes any amount borrowed), it does charge \$25 per ton over the Cap. In this projection, there would be 981 tons over the Total Cap of 655 charged at \$25 per ton, or **\$24,525** in charges by RIRRC, which would need to be factored into the budget if unlimited L&Y disposal for residents is desired.

#### Option 1 - L&Y Collection Schedule

L&Y collected weekly curbside from April 1 to November 30 (35 weeks), with Christmas tree collection done the second week in January, all provided by vendor.

#### Option 2 - L&Y Collection Schedule

This option duplicates Middletown's L&Y collection policy.

L&Y collected weekly curbside from April 1 to April 30, every other week from May 1 to October 31, and weekly from November 1 to the second week in December (22 weeks). Public Works would continue the Christmas tree collection the second week in January.

Comparing the Option 1 35-week collection to the Option 2 22-week collection, Option 2 is expected to produce cost savings by reducing the amount of labor and hauls the contractor will have to make.

#### Option 3 - L&Y Collection Weight Limit

In order to limit the amount of L&Y placed curbside per collection day, and in accordance with many current vendor policies (that have workers collecting L&Y manually), the Council could impose a weight limit. For example:

*"L&Y shall not weigh more than 50 pounds in its container(s) and shall be placed in paper bags, a 32-gallon container, or securely tied in bundles with twine on collection day."*

### **3. Elimination of pay-as-you-throw (PAYT) bags:**

Both the Town and the waste consultant expect the elimination of PAYT bags will attract a larger number of residents to opt into the Town's curbside program.

- However, elimination of PAYT bags will also likely result in a negative effect on the targeted 35% recycling rate set by RIRRC and therefore, higher tipping fees for MSW as residents tend to be less diligent with their Mixed Recycling when they do not have to pay for PAYT bags to throw away MSW.
  - Downsizing the default tote size from 90/95 gallon to 60/65 gallon for both MSW and Mixed Recycling may help the recycling rate by creating limited room for MSW, forcing the resident to recycle to have more room for waste. If a resident needs a second tote for MSW, that resident would be responsible for the cost of the tote and sticker.
  - Alternatively, the Town could sell PAYT bags for overflow waste.
  - Alternatively, residents would have the option to swap out the 60/65 gallon recycling tote for a 90/95 gallon tote.
- Elimination of PAYT bags will remove the PAYT revenue stream.

- Elimination of PAYT bags will require higher monthly fees per household for the curbside program and/or
- Will require an increased subsidy from tax revenue to maintain a monthly fee low enough to attract the majority of households to sign up for the Town-contracted service.
- PAYT encompasses three interrelated components that are key to successful community programs:
  - **Environmental Sustainability** - Communities with programs in place have reported significant increases in recycling and reductions in waste, due primarily to the waste reduction incentive created by PAYT.
  - **Economic Sustainability** - PAYT is an effective tool for communities struggling to cope with soaring municipal solid waste management expenses. Residents benefit, too, because they have the opportunity to take control of their trash bills.
  - **Equity** - One of the most important advantages of a PAYT program may be its fairness. When the cost of managing trash is hidden in taxes or charged at a flat rate, residents who recycle and prevent waste subsidize their neighbors' wastefulness. Under PAYT, residents pay for what they throw away.

**4. Single hauler:** Having a single hauler in town for curbside collection is the preferred option.

- Typically, a single hauler under a townwide contract should result in a lower cost per household when compared to multiple subscription haulers. However, the Town needs roughly 80% or 5,800 eligible households to sign up for the Town's contractor, which means the bid price will have to be significantly lower than current subscription service unless the Town wants to mandate a single, townwide hauler. This would still leave remaining commercial property and any building with four or more units to use their preferred contractor.
- Keeping the Town's program and sticker sale price significantly lower than the current private curbside contractors' prices should help insure a high sign-up rate if households are allowed to continue with their current subscription haulers as is the case with Middletown, but there is significant uncertainty associated with this approach that cannot be resolved until the new bid prices are received and evaluated. **See table on page 6.**

**5. Bulky waste curbside collection:** Bulky waste for curbside collection will be included in the RFP, as indications are two-thirds (2/3) of residents already have opted for this service with their current private curbside collection contractor.

**TRANSFER STATION**

The Town expects to include in the new RFP a separate section for limited operations of the Transfer Station to allow residents access to dispose of bulky waste and diversions.

- 1. Operation hours:** Proposed Transfer Station operation hours for bulky waste and diversion materials:
  - Saturday 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Sunday 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., and Wednesday 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
  - Option: Decide on Weekly, Biweekly, Monthly or Quarterly
- 2. Transfer Station collection procedures:** Residents who choose to use the Transfer Station to dispose of bulky waste and diversion materials may do so at a reduced cost compared to bulky waste collected

curbside (however, there is uncertainty associated in this assumption that cannot be resolved until the new bid prices are received and evaluated). Residents would likely purchase a sticker or pass from a recycling coordinator at the Tax Office. In order to verify payment to allow disposal at the Transfer Station, the resident would then affix the sticker to the bulky item or remit the pass to the contractor at the Transfer Station.

- Option: It is expected the fees for bulky waste and diversions will be determined by adding together all costs to operate the Transfer Station, the transportation of hauling the materials to the proper disposal location, and the tipping fees.

**3. Items accepted at the Transfer Station for Bulky Waste and Diversions:**

Item	Fee
Asphalt Bricks and Concrete (ABC)	Fee to be determined (TBD)
Bulky Waste (couches, chairs, anything too large for tote)	Fee TBD
Waste Oil	\$2.00 per gal or TBD
Metal	Fee TBD
White Goods – Washers, Dryers, Appliances	Fee TBD
Air Conditioners, Refrigerators, Appliances with freon	\$15 each to remove Freon plus additional fee TBD
Mattresses and Box Springs	\$70 fee if not in recyclable condition; otherwise free
Propane Tanks, without valves	Fee TBD
Tires – no rims	<20" - \$5; 20"-24" - \$10
Books and Clothing	Free in proper bin

## CONCLUSION

The Town Council must discuss and decide upon a few items prior to the development of an RFP for a hybrid option for townwide curbside collection of MSW without pay-as-you-throw bags, with Mixed Recycling, and L&Y, and with curbside bulky waste pickup as an extra payment option. The RFP will include operation of the Transfer Station, on a schedule for the Council to determine, for residents to dispose of bulky waste and diversion materials if they choose. **Note:** The Town has been out to bid twice for curbside collection with no award made. Our waste consultant highly recommends the Council be in agreement with the parameters decided upon in this document prior to the Town’s issuance of another RFP for curbside collection.

### Key Discussion Items

**Leaf & Yard Debris:**

1. Should the Town stay with the Town’s current schedule of 35 weeks, April 1 to November 30 with Christmas tree collection done the second week in January, all provided by vendor, OR,
2. Should the Town change to a 22-week schedule with weekly pick-ups April 1 to April 30, every other week from May 1 to October 31, and weekly from November 1 to the second week in December, with Public Works continuing the Christmas tree collection the second week in January?
3. Should the Town impose a “50-pound in its container(s)” (or similar) weight limit for L&Y per collection day?

These issues should be resolved before issuing the RFP.

**Elimination of Pay-as-You-Throw Bags:**

1. Elimination of PAYT is likely to have a negative effect on the targeted 35% recycling rate set by Rhode Island Resource and Recovery Corp (RIRRC).
  - a. One way to combat the negative effect would be to downsize the default tote size from 90/95 gallon to 60/65 gallon for MSW and Mixed Recycling, or alternatively,
  - b. Require PAYT bags for overflow waste, and/or,
  - c. Allow residents to swap out 60/65 gallon recycling tote for the 90/95 gallon tote.

This issue should be resolved before issuing the RFP.

**Single Hauler and Estimated Number of Residents for RFP:**

1. The most difficult part of this new program is estimating the number of residents who will sign up for the program.
  - a. Based on the experience of Middletown, roughly 80 percent of potentially eligible households are likely to sign up if all households are not required to use the Town selected contractor. An educated guess would be that 5,800 households would sign up out of the 7,200 eligible households in Portsmouth, but it will depend on the prices received from the bidding vendors. **This is a key issue.**
  - b. Clearly, an exclusive contract would resolve this, but would generate a significant amount of pushback from existing haulers.

It is important this issue be resolved before issuing the RFP.

**Transfer Station Hours of Collection:**

1. Key questions for proposed Transfer Station hours for bulky waste and diversion materials:
  - a. Is the best schedule to be open Saturday 7:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Sunday 7:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., & Wednesday 7:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.?
  - b. How often should the Transfer Station be open? Weekly? Biweekly? Monthly? Quarterly?

It is important to have decisions on the hours and frequency of operations of the Transfer Station before issuing the RFP.

**Cost Estimate:**

Following is a comparison using numbers received from our last RFP for curbside collection, which included 4,000 participating households. It is an estimate only.

Estimated Annual Costs (Revenue) with 4,000 Participating Households (HH) Based on Previous RFP						
Annual Estimated Cost for Private Curbside Collection	Total - Curbside Collection & Disposal	PAYT Bag Revenue	Per Resident With PAYT Revenue	Resident Using 1 Large PAYT Bag Per Week	Resident Using 2 Large PAYT Bags Per Week	Per Resident Without PAYT Bags
\$600 to \$727	\$1,606,020	(\$369,320)	\$309	\$421	\$533	\$402