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Trash Co-op Ponders Single Stream Recycling

By Chelsea Conaboy
Concord Monitor staff

Condensed from the January 18
Concord Monitor

The cooperative that handles trash disposal from Concord and 26 surrounding towns [including Andover] is considering building a state-of-the-art recycling facility, hoping to offset the rapidly increasing tipping fees on garbage. If it is built, residents would no longer have to separate paper and cardboard from bottles and cans. Everything could go in one bin.

Jim Presher, director of the Concord Regional Solid Waste/Resource Recovery Cooperative, said the approximately 60,000-square-foot facility would likely be located near the Interstate 93 corridor between Concord and Franklin. It would use a “single-stream” process, meaning all recyclables would be dumped on the same conveyer belt and then separated by sensors.

Experts say the added convenience for consumers would drive up [people’s participation in recycling], which would translate to less trash. Less trash means less money that the towns have to spend to have it hauled to the Wheelabrator incinerator or another disposal site.

“[Participation in recycling] can double easily, simply because it’s simple,” said Don Maurer, state supervisor of solid waste technical assistance.

Presher said the facility would also be able to process all seven types of plastic, while most recycling operations only accept three or four [types]. It could be the first single-stream center in the state, though another has been proposed in Southern New Hampshire.

First, Presher said, the cooperative has to decide whether the \$11 million project is feasible. He said the facility

would have to bring in between 15,000 and 20,000 tons of recyclables per year to make it work. The cooperative members produce about 10,000 tons annually [about 225 tons of which came from Andover last year]. He has invited municipalities within about a 50-mile radius from Concord to join.

“We have to make sure economically that it works,” Presher said.

He hopes to determine that by May. It would take about a year and a half from then to build and get online. In the meantime, he said, he’s talking with interested towns and looking at five possible sites.

Members of the cooperative [including Nan Kaplan, Susan Schnare, and Ken Tripp from the Andover Recycling Committee] visited a single-stream facility in Portland, Maine, last year. They observed cameras analyzing bottles and paper on the same conveyer belt and the air jets blowing them into one bin or another. [Some of Susan’s photos of the operation appeared on page 11 of the January *Beacon*, which you can see online at AndoverBeacon.com/online.asp.]

“It sounds kind of like Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory,” said Chip Chesley, Concord’s General Services director, who went on the field trip. “When you see it, it’s pretty impressive.”

In 2009, the cooperatives contract with Wheelabrator runs out. Tipping fees are expected to increase from \$43 per ton to between \$55 and \$65 per ton, Presher said. [Andover paid \$42.50 per ton last year and sent 1,240 tons to the incinerator. When the contract runs out, Andover’s tipping fee could rise to \$60 per ton, and after 2018 to \$80 per ton.]

The problem of increasing fees is not unique to New Hampshire, where trash

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State Changes Rules For Disposing Of Mercury

By Nelson Lebo
Andover Recycling Committee

As of January 1, New Hampshire residents can no longer dispose products containing “intentionally-added” mercury in landfills and incinerators. Lawmakers are concerned about the high toxicity of mercury as well as the way it accumulates in human tissue over time. Mercury causes damage to the liver and kidneys and is especially harmful to the brain.

The new state law bans the disposal of such products as:

- thermometers
- thermostats
- electrical switches
- mercury button cell batteries
- fluorescent light bulbs, including compact fluorescent bulbs

regardless of the amount of mercury they contain. This ban affects both ho-

meowners and businesses.

So what do you do now? There are several legal disposal options.

The Andover Transfer Station currently accepts fluorescent tubes and compact fluorescent light bulbs. Please see the attendant. There is no fee.

The Andover Transfer Station does not currently accept thermometers, thermostats, electrical switches, or mercury button cell batteries. Please save these items for the next Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day. Andover has not budgeted for a collection day in 2008, but likely will in 2009.

Homeowners and small businesses may also take up to six fluorescent lamps to participating TrueValue and Ace hardware stores where the lamps will be accepted and recycled. There is no cost to the consumer for this service.