

Concord Adopts Pay-As-You-Throw To Control Costs

By Shira Schoenberg
Concord Monitor staff

The Andover Recycling Committee requested that this article be reprinted in the Beacon, as pay-as-you-throw is an issue that has come up before in Andover and will probably come up again.

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The Concord City Council last night passed a pay-as-you-throw trash plan, by a vote of 12-3. The council heard an avalanche of testimony from city residents both for and against the program before voting about 11:15 PM. City Councilors Dick Patten, William Stetson and Dick Lemieux voted against the measure. As of July 1, residents will now need to buy their trash bags.

"Clearly it was a very difficult decision," Mayor Jim Bouley said. "I was happy to see as many people came out to express their opinions on both sides of the issue.... At the end of the day ... to have a 0% increase in the tax rate, we're going to have to be very creative and diligent in how we approach the budget."

Approximately half of the more than 55 people who attended last night's public hearing spoke, with 12 supporting the program, 11 opposing it, and four with mixed opinions.

Those who opposed the program cited economic concerns – under a pay-as-you-throw program, residents would need to pay for each bag of trash they throw out. City officials have said the resulting cost to the average family would be higher than if the program were not instituted.

"A lot of people are very broke, with difficult finances," Carol Hargrove said. "This is an addition to those difficulties."

Those concerns were countered by those who cited the environmental benefits of recycling, along with the economic benefits to the city, which would save an estimated \$900,000 in this coming fiscal year if pay-as-you-throw

is implemented.

"This is a unique opportunity to do it and do it right," Roger Hawk said. "The real overview issue is the amount of energy we're literally throwing away."

The city has said that the new program is necessary because of a large increase in the tipping fees for solid waste disposal, fees that are set by a contract between the Concord Regional Solid Waste Cooperative [of which Andover is a member] and Wheelabrator Technologies, which burns waste for energy. The program would include weekly recycling, without a fee, to encourage residents to recycle more and throw out less.

But last night, many residents urged the city to think about their own economic situations.

Several residents noted that the costs for trash bags are not tax-deductible. Single mother Bernadette Pelczar said she already keeps her house at 55 degrees to save money. While she favors recycling, she said she is concerned about the cost.

Peter Fernandes said the extra cost could be "the straw that breaks the camel's back" for some. "Four dollars a week is real money to a lot of people," he said.

Virginia Cannon said she supported recycling, but she urged the council to look past the numbers and think about how average families would be affected. For example, with an average family throwing out 1.6 trash bags a week, she said, "no one is going to keep .2 bags in August for next week to fill it up with .3 bags. It will take two bags to throw it out."

She said she did not oppose the program. But she added, "This economy's brutal, and this increase will not solve a \$2.5 million deficit. It only takes \$900,000. Be cognizant what it means for a household."

Thomas Sinotte said he feared this was only the "tip of the iceberg" and that the council would return to res-

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Bonny Morris was among those enjoying FuzzBoxx at Bluewater Lodge's Cabin Fever Dance.
Photo: Deb Brower

Cabin Fever Dance Raises \$380 For The Hamp House

By Deb Brower
Bluewater Farm and Lodge

The Cabin Fever Dance went really well. I always worry that no one will show up to our community events ... but they did! We had about 40 people all in all and a half dozen kids, whom I just loved seeing.

The Fuzz Boxx was the band, and they were great. There is nothing like dancing to a live band. I thoroughly enjoyed myself, and it looked like everybody else was having a good time, too.

We raised \$380 for the Hamp House

Community Center and had fun doing it. We also ended up with a dark grey wool hat with a tassel on a string and the little SmartWool guy emblem on it.

Thank you to everybody who helped us put the Lodge back together at the end of the dance, and to Mark Cowdrey for picking up our sign down on the Village Green.

I get such a big kick out of seeing our town out having a good time together. Thanks for coming up, and if you didn't make it this time, I hope you can the next.

Concord's PAYT Program

Goes into effect: July 1

Cost: Residents must pay \$2 a bag for a 30-gallon trash bag and \$1 a bag for a 15-gallon bag.

Buying bags: Bags will be available at local grocery stores and other retailers.

Who is affected: Residents of single-family homes or smaller multi-family homes must buy bags. For residents of larger condominiums and apartment complexes, the condominium association or landlord will be charged a monthly fee based on the number of dumpsters serviced by the city.

Recycling: Recycling will be picked up weekly at no cost.

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