

Solid Waste Tax District Public Hearing 3/18/14; 4/1/14

I attended the public hearing on 3/18. Here are my observations based upon what others have said.

1. The main problem is that the county had a good funding system which has been called into question. Many speakers supported the fee system and feared that a tax district would cost them more.
2. People with open land, forest or agricultural land should be using the Present Use Value Program (and other conservation incentives) so their tax valuation should not be high. The majority of people should pay less in tax than in the old fee since only a relative few have higher assessed properties.
3. Some people described the problem of very long private roads. How many of this type of properties are actually in the proposed tax district? Aren't the majority of homes more suburban like?
4. There are definitely some individuals who will recycle without curb side service but it is clear to me that curb side service will increase the amount of recycling in the entire community.
5. A number of people spoke about alternatives. I do not see over the short term how any of the other alternatives can be implemented.
6. Would enough money be generated if the tax was 0.01 instead of 0.015 and some of the general tax revenue was used for the education component of the recycling program?

From Loren Hintz

Chapel Hill, NC

To: David Welch
Subject: Questions about Commission on Environment discussions of Tax District
From: Jeanne Brown
Date: 21 Mar 2014

David

My concern in reading the Commission's resolution and meeting minutes is that it was accompanied by very little data and critical discussion - especially for a group that evaluates cutting edge environmental programs.

Imposing a tax on the unincorporated area will provide a funding mechanism for the county's recycling efforts; however, many of the really good criteria that are included in the resolution submitted to the BOCC (equitable, cost effective, economies of scale....) are not achieved in the service model or funding mechanism being put forward. In addition, it does little more than maintain the status quo and does not look for new ways to increase participation or provide the type of service that payors need.

In terms of public policy, a huge point to consider is this: the decision to provide outsourced services to the towns and in-house services within the county affects the ability of the county to benefit from economies of scale and supporting a tightly integrated recycling program. As a result, these decisions will end up costing unincorporated residents significantly more if we continue to try to support an in-house program. (Especially if the towns insist on 5 year contracts as I've been told).

The difference in costs and frequency of service between the two programs (\$60 per single family home) versus the unincorporated area (\$90 - \$100 and rising for opt-in; \$25 - \$200+ if assessed as a tax) suggest that it may be more economical for the county to outsource all or part of the unincorporated area's services too; however, an RFP has not been requested.

It appears that there is a perception that taxation will increase participation within the rural community leading to an increase in recycled materials/decrease in waste; however, data shows that Convenience Centers account for 42% of the county's residential recycling and testimony from those who spoke indicates that roll carts and curbside are simply not practical as their current methods of hauling recycling when they take trash to the Convenience Centers or using a small hauling company for both.

The following data has been helpful for me in evaluating this issue:

- The remaining "county" group, when lumped together in a tax district contains two large and vastly different "user" groups making single service problematic:
 - 57% curbside users (at least once a month; 7,800 properties)
 - 43% non-curbside users (Convenience Center users, small hauler users, undeveloped properties; 6,100 properties)
- Having just 7,800 "customers" does not seem to be enough to allow the county to provide the service cost-effectively as evidenced by the big difference in cost and frequency of service between in-house and out-sourced solutions.

In terms of fiscal equity, the program is inequitable to a vast majority (>50%) of landowners because it

- fails to provide a practical service for many who drive trash/recycling to Convenience Centers or use small haulers
- taxes undeveloped parcels of land
- charges vastly different amounts for similar services (the range within 2 blocks of me is \$43 - \$200)
- doesn't charge 694 tax exempt organizations.....

I attended Tuesday night's public forum which included 20 or so speakers. Everyone who spoke supports recycling with everyone explaining how they recycle. Most shared the concerns listed above.

It is my hope that the BOCC will request RFP's from Waste Industries and consider creative curbside/rural programs such as the ones being used in Catawba County which is considered to be #1 in North Carolina - before talking further about funding mechanisms.

Best

Jeanne