

Approving New Landfill in County Plan Would Open Trash Disposal Field to Competition

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prior to making a major change in trash disposal in the EUP, Mr. Hopper said.

Changing membership on the Solid Waste Committee would be easier for Mackinac County than creating a new plan of its own, Mr. Campbell said, so the county made recommendations and Regional Planning agreed to change membership on the Committee Thursday, February 1. The Committee will retain only one member from Waste Management, but Regional Planning has not yet contacted all the new, potential appointees. When new membership is established, the Committee will vote again on the proposal to add Republic Waste's landfill to the solid waste plan, Mr. Hagen said. Lynn Morgan, a spokesperson for Waste

Management, told *The St. Ignace News* that "the committee has had very sound reasons for repeatedly rejecting requests to export waste to the Elk Run Landfill in Presque Isle County. Unfortunately, some folks are now focused on our participation in the debate," she said, "rather than the real and costly consequences of that proposal."

Waste Management disputed the assertion that it could charge competitors too much to use its disposal facilities. All haulers are charged the same rate, Ms. Morgan said, but volume discounts are awarded.

Matt Neeley, area president for Republic, said driving Republic's own trucks from its disposal site, picking up trash, and returning would be far cheaper for the company than conducting trash pick up in Mackinac County, driving to Waste

Management's site in Dafer, which is in Chippewa County, and then returning to its facility in lower Michigan.

Besides, he argues, Waste Management keeps the landfill profits in Dafer, while Republic would keep them at Elk Run.

Ms. Morgan at Waste Management, however, contends that landfill profits depend on volume.

"The high costs of [running] a modern, fully engineered landfill such as Dafer," she said, "are affordable only because the site receives sufficient volumes of waste to spread its expenses across many users. The area just can't afford another landfill in the long run."

She added that the Solid Waste Committee has created a system that keeps trash disposal costs as low as possible, while also focusing on environmental protection. While bringing in another company may reduce costs for some residents for a time, without sufficient trash volume to support two landfills, one or the other eventually would close, she predicts. Then, the area would be back to one facility.

Mr. Neeley said this is not likely to happen to the Elk Run Landfill because it is operating now without being part of the solid EUP's plan.

Owing to the location of the Waste Management landfill in Dafer, the solid waste plan as been a "good fit" for the region, Ms. Morgan said, partly because the plan has allowed transportation distances to be minimized.

Mr. Campbell said Waste Management must haul trash 30 miles from St. Ignace to its disposal site. Republic would have to transport it 62.67 miles.

"Republic Waste is at a serious disadvantage right off the bat," he said.

Mr. Neeley said estimates of how much he would charge are not available for comparison with Waste Management's prices because its landfill is not yet approved and bids have not been made, but, "if people have an alternative, it usually results

in cost savings," he said.

Trustee Mark Spencer of Moran Township said this has been his hope all along.

Competition from Republic would also draw funding away from Dafer Township, Ms. Morgan said.

The township receives 10¢ for every cubic yard of waste disposed in its local landfill, Mr. Campbell said.

Dafer Township Supervisor Wayne Trepanier said that removing revenue produced by Mackinac County's waste disposal would not be a significant financial blow to his municipality.

"We would notice the reduction," he said, "but it would not cause us to cut services."

He added that if the competition reduces waste disposal costs for people elsewhere in the EUP, then he considers it a good thing, but the change would not help the people of Dafer. He also said that Waste Management has been generous to the area and has helped with road paving costs.

One of Waste Management's key arguments against potential competition is that "amending the solid waste plan could put the area's fledgling recycling programs at risk."

Ms. Morgan told *The St. Ignace News* that "Waste Management provides recycling in St. Ignace, Sault Ste. Marie, and other communities, as well as several schools. Mr. Neeley said that Republic operates recycling programs across the United States and collects recyclable materials from many of its customers in Michigan. The company then delivers them to independent processors in the state, he added.

Waste Management would not immediately cut programs or raise disposal prices if the solid waste plan were amended, Ms. Morgan said. But if the company's resources are reduced, its ability to donate to area projects would be lessened, making it much harder to contribute to recycling programs, donate to athletic teams or road projects.

"These are the kinds of projects that go by the wayside," Ms. Morgan said. Nevertheless, should access to Waste Management sites become unavailable, Mr. Campbell said, the

EUP would need access to other approved landfills. Aside from the Dafer facility, the only other approved landfill in the Upper Peninsula is near Munising, owned by a small company called Wood Island Management, Inc.

Increased employment is also argued by Moran Township trustees. Mr. Neeley of Republic said, "We always hire from the communities we service," so adding service to Mackinac County could result in hiring drivers from the area, as well as the potential to hire more people to work at its disposal site."

Disappointed with the most recent vote to keep another company's landfill out of the solid waste plan, Commission Chairwoman Nelson said that if the Solid Waste Committee continues to deny other companies the ability to successfully do business in the EUP, the Mackinac County Board of Commissioners may vote to form a solid waste plan of its own.

The county, however, wouldn't operate a Mackinac County waste disposal system, Mr. Campbell explained. Forming its own plan would simply allow the commissioners to choose which companies it does business with, allowing Waste Management, Republic, and possibly other companies to operate in the area.

Undeterred by Waste Management's objections, Mackinac County is pushing to approve other landfills in the county's plan to operate in the county, and Mark Spencer of the Moran Township Board of Trustees said he has made bringing Republic to the county a special project.

"Competition breeds better service," he said.

One of the reasons the area needs better service, Mr. Spencer told *The St. Ignace News*, is that his board has received complaints throughout the year that Waste Management's facility in St. Ignace is repeatedly closed during scheduled hours. Residents transport trash significant distances, he said, only to find that they cannot dispose of it.

Waste Management called this allegation "puzzling."

"The general hours have not changed for two years," Ms. Morgan

said, "and we are aware of only one three-minute delay in opening the center." Perhaps the changeover from the longer summer hours to the shorter fall, winter, and spring hours, caused confusion, she speculated.

Groups To Study Family Services

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immunizations in each county," Mr. Davis said. "Part of this whole process has to be parents. Parent coalitions are being formed to help us meet the needs of area families."

In Mackinac County, day care provider Sara Johnston will serve as a parent coalition leader. Russ Passage will serve in that capacity in Sault Ste. Marie and Stephanie Steikar will serve in outer regions of Chippewa County. Groups will meet regularly and will share information about local needs for health care, child care, and education with the Great Start Collaborative group.

If funded for a second year, the program's goal would be to form a plan for working together to improve local services.

"In the second year, we would make a plan for how area services could be realigned to better serve families," Mr. Davis said.

The grant is part of \$3.15 million the state has invested in forming 21 Great Start Collaboratives across Michigan to coordinate community resources to help young children and their families. The Early Childhood Investment Corporation, announced by Governor Jennifer Granholm in 2005, provides grants from public and private funding sources. W.K. Kellogg Foundation contributed to the Great Start Collaborative grants.

"Children who participate in high quality early childhood development programs are better prepared to enter elementary school, are more likely to pursue secondary education, and have lower dropout rates and higher high school graduation rates," said Marianne Udow, director of the Department of Human Services. "By improving the skills of a large fraction of the workforce, these programs for poor children will reduce poverty and strengthen the state's ability to compete in the global market."

Parents who would like to become involved in the Parent Coalition in their county are asked to call Mr. Davis at the Intermediate School District office in Sault Ste. Marie at (906) 632-3373, extension 119, or visit the Web site www.eup.k12.mi.us.

Researchers Report on Craft Marketing

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to linking craft and economy from around the country and the world.

The cultural tourism component of CraftWORKS! Michigan has developed into a separate but related initiative called Destination Culture: Michigan, a Web site now under construction. Designed to draw visitors to Michigan to enjoy cultural resources, the site will be an online resource center that will feature searchable databases of Michigan's cultural assets.

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