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### Towns Consider Pay-As-You-Throw Trash Removal

Wednesday, 03/24/10 7:34am and 5:30pm

Susan Keese - Brattleboro, VT



VPR/Susan Keese

(Host) In an era of tight budgets, some communities are looking for innovative ways of dealing with household trash.

Recently two southern Vermont towns adopted a new system that some say would save money and encourage recycling. Others say the idea itself should be thrown to the curb.

VPR's Susan Keese reports.

*(Sound of trash truck)*

(Keese) Brattleboro is one of only a few communities in Vermont where curbside trash collection is a town service, paid for by property taxes. It's been that way since the 1920s.

Residents throw away six million pounds of refuse each year.

The town pays \$100 a ton to put it in a landfill in Moretown, 120 miles north.

Brattleboro town manager Barbara Sondag says the trash budget is almost a million dollars. And Sondag says the rate of recycling in town is also lower than it should be.

*(Sondag) "So we've been talking about the amount of trash we generate for three or four years, looking at ways to reduce the amount of money we spend on collection and disposal of our waste and looking at ways to improve our recycling rate."*

(Keese) Last Saturday at the town's annual Representative Town Meeting, delegates agreed, after hours of debate, to try a new system called pay-as-you-throw.

That's a system where households pay for trash disposal based on how much they throw away. In Brattleboro, residents will buy special trash bags, priced according to size.

But the idea has been a hard sell. Brattleboro town meeting representatives defeated a similar measure last year. And already there's a petition circulating to bring this year's representative vote to a town-wide referendum.

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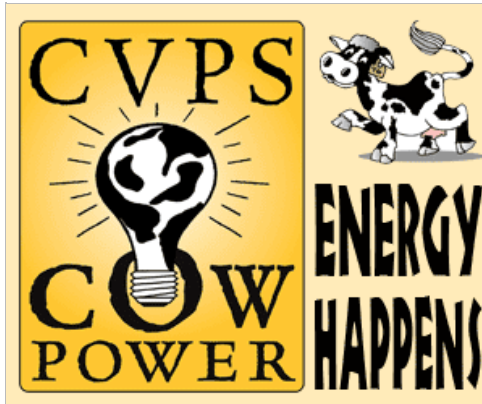
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*(Bouboulis) "I think the vast majority of people in this town are not in favor of it, and there's a lot of concerns."*

(Keese) Select board member Dora Bouboulis is among those circulating that petition.

*(Bouboulis) "I'm not convinced right now entirely that pay-as-you-throw is the right thing. But I'm also saying that if we're going to do this we're not ready for it."*

(Keese) Bouboulis says the town needs more preparation and facilities to accommodate a rapid rise in recycling.

There are also worries about the costs for low-income families and retirees, and about the threat of illegal dumping if trash collection is no longer free.

The town of Westminster also adopted pay-as-you-throw this spring. Jan Ameen, the town's solid waste coordinator, says it's controversial there as well.

*(Ameen) "They've been allowed unlimited trash disposal for decades and so you're really asking them to, A, take money out of pocket, which they don't want to do, and B you're asking them to separate their materials, if they don't want to pay for four, five, six bags of trash, you're kind of asking them to change their habits and recycle."*

(Keese) In Chittenden County, where most residents already pay for trash disposal, pay-as-you-throw is also on the radar screen.

Nancy Plunkett is with the Chittenden Solid Waste District, which is considering requiring trash haulers to base their charge on the amount of trash a household generates.

*(Plunkett) So like water and electricity this would be a system based on how much you set out at the curb. But then you can put out as much recycling as you want on the curb. There's no limit on that.*

(Keese) Plunkett says the mission is to reduce the need for landfills and keep valuable, reusable resources in circulation.

For VPR News, I'm Susan Keese.

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trash

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