

Is this *really* Haddam's 21st Century Waste Management Solution?

Haddam residents must soon take action to determine how we will manage our waste in the future.

To make good decisions, we must have accurate and complete information. But information provided by the town this week doesn't tell the whole story, and doesn't explain all the options available to us.

While the current deadline to stop using the existing Transfer Station is July 31, 2010, it is still possible to arrange an interim solution while we make sure the best long-term solution is researched and developed.

While many residents think they only pay \$30 a year for waste disposal, the real cost is much higher.

Residents who pay taxes and use the transfer station on average pay \$223 per year per household for waste disposal. Residents who also use private hauling pay that price plus their contractor's service fee. But these numbers don't tell the whole story.

Waste collection costs – the cost of driving your household garbage to the Transfer Station – can bring your total out-of-pocket expenses to over \$600 per household per year!

Because managing waste collection and disposal can be done in many different ways, figuring the cost of different options can be confusing. But one thing is certain: residents of Haddam will pay the whole bill no matter what we ultimately choose. In addition, our children will live with and pay for the choices we make now, so we must do our very best to make well-informed decisions, from all the alternatives available to us.



What are our future options?

Neighboring towns use a variety of methods to manage their waste collection and disposal needs. Models include:

- Town-paid (taxpayer-funded) curbside pickup for trash and recyclables garbage, with a town-operated (taxpayer-funded) Transfer Station available for residents to drop bulky waste for an extra charge.
- Town operated (taxpayer-funded) Transfer Station available for residents to drop off most types of garbage; residents *may* hire private haulers at their own added expense
- Town operated (taxpayer-funded) Transfer Station for recyclables only and bulky waste for an extra charge; residents *must* hire and pay for own curbside pickup service.
- No Transfer Station; residents *may* drop bulky waste at neighboring town's Transfer Station and *must* hire private hauler at their own expense to do pick up trash and recyclables at their own expense.
- Various combinations of the above.

Costs for these models vary by town.

Some towns require the purchase of a permit that allows any amount of dumping of specific materials at the Transfer Station, while some towns set an amount to be paid per bag or per pound of waste.

Clearly, there are many more options than simply having a transfer station or not having a transfer station.

NOTE: No community allows household hazardous waste to be deposited at a local transfer station. Each town is a participant in regional programs. Haddam is part of the Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency (CRERPA) with a hazardous waste drop-off in Essex.

Are construction costs and operating expenses the only issues?

No.

For instance, though Haddam residents have repeatedly expressed strong interest in better recycling methods, no steps have been taken toward this goal with the existing Transfer Station, and there is little mention of recycling in the most recent newsletter. How much can Haddam reduce its waste management costs by increasing its recycling, or reducing its waste stream in other ways?

Other issues which have not been publicly discussed include, but are not limited to:

- Additional maintenance costs due to wear and tear on roadways heavily used by garbage trucks and resident vehicles.
- The cost of communicating with and educating residents about the various issues related to choosing and using a new waste management solution.
- How will a Transfer Station located in an inconvenient location affect secondary road congestion?
- What about the quality of life of Transfer Station area residents subjected to massively increased traffic?
- What about the convenience for residents who live far from the facility?
- How will roadsides littered by trash dropped from passing vehicles be maintained?
- How will the current faltering economy affect the cost of construction of a new facility, and the ability of residents to pay higher taxes which could result?

Clearly, there are many “hidden costs” that will greatly impact the price tags of any option chosen. Taxpaying residents have an interest in knowing the answers to these and many other questions. In addition, environmental and other concerns raise questions that are not currently being addressed.

What about Haddam Neck?

The distance from Haddam Neck homes to the rest of Haddam – across a bridge that forms a traffic bottleneck – invites the question of whether a “one-size-fits-all” solution would be the most cost-effective for residents of this outlying area.

Conclusion: *The Alternatives Presented are Incomplete*

By their own admission, the alternatives presented in the town newsletter are too limited: relocating a facility to Cedar Lake Road or “privatization.” The supporting arguments are not adequately explained, nor are the exclusion of other possible options.

A more prudent plan is to:

- Prepare for interim town-contracted curbside pickup service taking effect August 1, 2010, and
- Immediately form an open Community Waste Management Task Force empowered to research in detail the many issues that will go into a longer-term waste management solution which will serve Haddam well into the 21st century.

This Task Force should include representatives from current relevant town committees including Finance, Planning & Zoning and Energy & Sustainability, as well as the Public Works Director and other citizens who have developed an interest and expertise in the topic. The Task Force will conduct open meetings and will keep and report proper minutes of its proceedings, and may solicit expert counsel on related topics as needed. Final recommendations of the Task Force will be voted on by town residents and acted upon by the Board of Selectmen.

For this path to be chosen, it must be made a part of the ordinance to be discussed at the next Town Hearing and voted on at the Town Meeting which will follow.

Please call the Selectman’s office tomorrow morning at 345-8531 to express support for this plan.

Haddam has several online resources including:

<http://Haddam.org>

Haddam’s official town website

<http://HaddamGreen.org>

News, Analysis, Opinion and Commentary

<http://HaddamBulletin.com>

Haddam, Higganum & Haddam Neck News & Events

<http://ABetterHaddam.com>

You can also join the Facebook group called “[Haddam, Connecticut](#)”

This flyer was prepared by a team of Haddam citizens who support sensible planning for Haddam’s future.