

Wrightsville Beach to look into curbside recycling

By Patricia E. Matson
Citydesk@StarNewsOnline.com

Published: Sunday, August 23, 2009 at 5:05 p.m.
Last Modified: Sunday, August 23, 2009 at 5:05 p.m.

Wrightsville Beach is planning some research on the possibility of using curbside recycling instead of or in addition to its current recycling collection center next to the town hall.

The issue came up earlier this year during budget talks. The current system costs about \$126,500 per year, basically for tipping fees. Use is increasing, so the cost is expected to continue rising.

Alderwoman Lisa Weeks brought up the issue again at last week's town board meeting. She said that on Oct. 1, a law will go into effect forbidding disposing of aluminum or rigid plastic in landfills. Weeks said she thought it will be easier to enforce this through curbside recycling, in which each household is responsible for its own container, than through the central collection bins.

Weeks added that she would expect better recycling compliance in general because of the convenience.

It has been estimated that having the Public Works department collect recyclables curbside would cost about \$150,000. Alternatively, Green Coast, a private collection company that already collects recycling from town businesses, has said it could provide the service for a fee of about \$7 per home if at least 200 homes enroll.

Sean Ahlum, a Coral Drive resident, said that plastic trash has a very negative impact on marine areas. It degrades into small pieces that get eaten by animals, and he said a million sea birds and 100,000 mammals die annually because of this.

Ahlum, who works at the University on North Carolina Wilmington, also offered to design a project for students of doing a door-to-door survey about residential attitudes toward recycling and acceptable costs for curbside service.

According to Town Manager Bob Simpson, an intern also will be surveying users at the dumpster site in September.

Mayor Steve Whalen has been talking with county officials about the need for New Hanover to supplement town finances, because the recycling drop point is used by so many nonresidents,

especially from Landfall and Mayfaire. He said he hopes that the possibility of the town's switching to curbside recycling may strengthen this argument.