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Subject: Transfer Station Fee Adjustments, Household Trash Limits, and Future Solid Waste Funding Considerations

Background

The Department of Public Works has reviewed the Town's Transfer Station fee schedule and is recommending several adjustments to better reflect disposal costs, improve operational efficiency, and ensure the facility is being used for its intended purpose.

In addition to the proposed fee adjustments, I am recommending that the Select Board establish a daily household trash disposal limit to address ongoing issues with excessive waste being brought to the Transfer Station.

I would also like to begin a broader discussion about the possibility of transitioning a portion of the Town's solid waste collection and disposal costs from general taxation to a user-fee system through an annual registration process. This would be a future policy discussion, and I am not requesting that the Board establish a registration fee at this meeting.

Proposed Transfer Station Fee Adjustments

The attached fee schedule identifies the proposed changes in red. These adjustments are intended to better align certain fees with disposal expenses and clarify which materials the Transfer Station will accept.

The proposed changes include:

- **CFC Appliances:** $25 per item.
- **Televisions and Monitors:** $25 per item.
- **Electronics:** $15 per item.
- **Propane Tanks (20 lb.):** $15 per item.
- **Small Pressure Cylinders:** $5 per item.
- **Fluorescent Tubes:** $1 per tube plus $0.25 per foot.
- **Compact Fluorescent Bulbs:** $1 each.
- **Solar Panels:** $50 per item.
- **Tractor and Equipment Tires:** No longer accepted.
- **Brush and Yard Waste:** No charge.
- **Punch Cards:** $25.
- **Construction/Demolition Debris, Bulky Items, and Hazardous Materials:** Not accepted.

Transfer Station stickers would continue to be issued at no charge under the proposed schedule, pending any future consideration of a registration system.

These changes are relatively modest but will help maintain consistency in operations and better manage the costs associated with disposing of certain materials.

Proposed Daily Household Trash Limit

The Enfield Transfer Station is designed to serve residents disposing of normal household waste. It is not intended to accommodate large property cleanouts, construction projects, or commercial disposal activities.

Unfortunately, we continue to experience situations where contractors and individuals bring large quantities of waste from property cleanouts to the Transfer Station. In some instances, these individuals challenge attendants when loads are refused, creating unnecessary confrontations for employees who are simply attempting to enforce the Town's disposal requirements.

Large loads can also quickly fill the Transfer Station's trash containers, particularly on weekends when disposal volumes are already high. This can require additional trucking and disposal trips, increasing costs and reducing the availability of the facility for residents bringing normal household waste.

To address these concerns, I recommend establishing the following **daily household trash disposal limit per residential user:**

- Five (5) standard kitchen-size trash bags; or
- Two (2) 30-gallon trash bags; or
- An equivalent volume of household trash.

This would be a **per-day limit rather than a per-visit limit**, preventing individuals from making multiple trips to circumvent the restriction.

Residents undertaking major cleanouts, renovations, or other projects generating substantial amounts of waste should arrange for a private roll-off dumpster or transport acceptable materials directly to an appropriate disposal facility, such as the Lebanon landfill.

These restrictions are not intended to inconvenience residents conducting normal household activities. Rather, they establish reasonable limits that preserve the Transfer Station's capacity, reduce unnecessary trucking costs, and provide attendants with clear standards that can be consistently enforced.

Maintaining an Economical and Efficient Solid Waste System

It is important to recognize that Enfield currently provides residents with a relatively economical solid waste collection and disposal system. The combination of Town-provided curbside collection and Transfer Station services offers residents a substantial benefit at a cost that remains considerably less than what most households would pay if they were required to contract individually for private curbside trash collection.

The intent of these proposed changes is not to fundamentally alter a system that has served the community well, but to make reasonable operational improvements that help preserve its affordability.

Establishing daily trash limits, addressing excessive disposal from cleanouts and contractors, and potentially implementing other modest restrictions will help control hauling and disposal expenses with minimal impact on residents who use the system for normal household waste.

These relatively small changes can improve efficiency and reduce unnecessary expenses without significantly changing the level of service residents have come to expect. By taking reasonable steps now, the Town can help preserve an affordable and convenient solid waste system while limiting future cost increases to taxpayers.

Future Discussion: Transfer Station and Curbside Collection Registration System

Currently, the Town's solid waste collection and disposal services are supported primarily through the general tax base, meaning all property taxpayers contribute to these services regardless of how frequently they use them or the volume of waste they generate.

I would like the Select Board to begin considering whether a portion of these costs should instead be supported through an annual registration or user-fee system. The intent would not necessarily be to eliminate property tax support, but to explore a more equitable balance between general taxation and fees paid by those utilizing the services.

One possible approach would involve establishing an annual registration packet that includes both a Transfer Station sticker and a registration sticker for one Town-provided curbside trash container, commonly referred to as a toter.

Under this approach, each registration packet would authorize the use of one curbside trash toter along with access to the Transfer Station. Properties requiring additional toters could purchase additional registration packets.

This would also address an existing inequity in the Town's curbside collection system. Currently, single-family residences are generally provided one Town trash toter, while some multifamily properties have multiple Town-provided toters. These properties receive substantially greater collection capacity without a corresponding direct charge for the additional service.

A registration system could establish a more consistent and equitable approach by connecting the number of trash containers serviced to the number of registrations purchased. For example, a multifamily property utilizing four Town-provided toters could purchase four registration packets, while a single-family property utilizing one toter would need only one.

This approach would better recognize the additional collection and disposal costs associated with properties generating greater volumes of waste, while maintaining access to affordable municipal solid waste services.

A registration packet could also provide residents with updated information about accepted materials, Transfer Station disposal limits, recycling requirements, curbside collection procedures, and other operating rules. This would improve communication while helping the Town identify authorized users and track the number of containers being serviced.

AI Assisted

There are several considerations that would need to be evaluated before implementing such a system, including the appropriate fee amount, administrative costs, affordability for residents, treatment of multifamily properties, and potential reductions in the general tax appropriation.

One option would be to establish a relatively modest fee for the initial registration packet while charging a higher amount for additional packets or containers. Another would be to establish a uniform fee for each registration. These alternatives should be evaluated based on actual program costs and the level of service provided.

Importantly, any registration fee should be considered in the context of the overall solid waste budget. The goal would be to offset expenses currently supported through property taxes rather than simply create an additional revenue source without a corresponding benefit to taxpayers.

I am not requesting that the Select Board establish a registration fee at this meeting. Rather, I would like to introduce the concept and receive initial feedback before developing a more detailed proposal that evaluates costs, potential revenues, implementation options, and impacts on residents.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Enfield has developed an economical solid waste collection and disposal system that provides substantial value to residents compared with the cost of obtaining private curbside collection. Maintaining this service in a financially responsible manner requires reasonable operating rules that protect the system from excessive use and unnecessary expenses.

The proposed Transfer Station fee adjustments and daily household trash limits are modest operational changes that will help control costs, preserve disposal capacity, and provide employees with clear and consistent enforcement standards. These changes should have minimal impact on residents disposing of normal household waste.

Looking ahead, a combined Transfer Station and curbside collection registration system could provide a more equitable approach to funding these services, particularly for properties utilizing multiple Town-provided trash containers. Such a system could also reduce reliance on general taxation while preserving an affordable basic level of service for residents.

I recommend that the Select Board approve the proposed fee schedule and daily household trash limits at this meeting and begin a preliminary discussion about the potential registration system, with no decision on registration fees until additional financial and operational information can be presented.

Proposed Motion

Move to approve the revised Town of Enfield Transfer Station Fee Schedule as presented, including the identified changes to disposal fees and accepted materials, and further establish a daily household trash disposal limit of five (5) standard kitchen-size trash bags, two (2) 30-gallon trash bags, or an equivalent volume per residential user per day, with implementation and enforcement administered by the Department of Public Works, and hereby authorize the Town Manager or designee to take such actions and execute all documents that may be necessary.