

PD 2-5-12

Toledo, county seek recycling facility bids

Toledo Blade

TOLEDO — The city and Lucas County commissioners are seeking a company that can process recyclables in Toledo as part of a public-private partnership that officials believe will save taxpayers money.

"We're here to talk trash today," joked Commissioner Pete Gerken on Jan. 17..

Residents would not see a change in how they sort or dispose of their trash and recyclables currently, county Sanitary Engineer Jim Shaw said. Commissioners approved a request for proposals; the deadline for bids is Feb. 29.

The facility would be built and operated by a private company but owned by the county, Gerken stated. County officials said they believe there is enough private-sector interest for the plan.

Long term, the facility would sort up to 40,000 tons per year of bottles and cans from the city's curbside recycling program and the Lucas County Solid Waste District's recycling program.

Officials say the savings would come from being able to sell the recyclables on commodity markets.

"Why haven't we done this before?" Shaw asked. "It's all dependent on the volumes," which are now great enough to support such a facility, he said. Currently, recyclables from the city are hauled by a private contractor to a facility in Ann Arbor. Other recyclables are collected by the county's Solid Waste Management District at a variety of drop-off sites in the county such as Kroger stores and township halls.

Exactly how much money could be saved won't be clear until company proposals come in, said Jen Sorgenfrei, Mayor Mike Bell's spokesman.

"The savings we realize comes from the ability to process the materials at our own facility instead of trucking them to Michigan and paying someone else to process them for us. Additional revenue will be realized through new income taxes generated through the construction and operation of the facility," Sorgenfrei said.

Talk of Local Government Fund perks up

NH 2-5-12

Lake County commissioners recently passed a resolution that would look to repeal the way the state's Local Government Fund has been distributed throughout the county for the last 30 years.

State law stipulates a county keeps 30 percent of the Local Government Fund and then the rest is divided among the various entities unless there is an alternative distribution formula in place in a county — which there is in Lake.

When the formula was approved in 1982 it was determined the county would receive 11 percent of the allocation rather than the full 30 percent, which commissioners say they recently discovered the county could receive.

Only one other county keeps less than that amount — Belmont County, which keeps 16 percent.

For a change to occur now, state law also requires the governing bodies of the largest city in the county — in this case Mentor — and a majority of the communities also pass resolutions to approve the change.

Commissioners said the communities within the county have received the sweetest deal in the state of Ohio for 30 years and it's time to revisit the issue.

The timing of this proposal came into question by some community leaders, especially after the resolution passed two days after commissioners approved a 0.5 percent raise in the county's sales tax, while reducing property taxes and stormwater management fees.

It's no secret the city of Mentor wanted commissioners to delay the sales tax decision to give the city additional time for study and input.



John Arthur Hutchison

Commissioners repeatedly said they had no choice but to increase the county's revenue or services would take a major hit and delaying that decision would further hurt the county's budget this year.

What that discussion also brought to light was the sometimes acrimonious relationship between the governments of Mentor and Lake County.

With that said, there is little chance Mentor officials would agree to give up a portion of the \$2,706,603 the city received in fiscal year 2011 from the Local Government Fund. Lake County received a \$1,832,578 share.

Even if Mentor would, a majority of communities in the county also need to approve the idea. We've heard numerous times and printed stories about how communities struggle with their own budgets, so that support is doubtful.

Perhaps the commissioners' timing was bad, maybe a few feathers were ruffled or there were some egos involved, but even if the proposal fails, one thing for certain was accomplished. The issue has been brought to public attention, and it likely won't go away as long as there is a Local Government Fund.

If it fails to materialize, the next opportunity to begin the process is five years, according to state law. Who knows what the Board of Lake County Commissioners will look like then and what the financial situation of local governments will be.

Fundies

■ Fundraiser for **James Helmink**, candidate for Ohio House of Representatives District 60, with special guest state Sen. **Capri Cafaro**, 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday, at Cappelli's in Mentor. See **Michael Wagner** or **Helmink**.

■ Fundraiser for **Judy Moran**, candidate for Lake County commissioner, 5 to 7:30 p.m. Feb. 13 at Dino's Restaurant and Banquet Center in Willoughby. See **Kathy Russo**, **Traci Olic** or **Kevin Malecek**.

■ Annual Mardi Gras Party for **Daniel P. Troy**, candidate for Ohio House of Representatives District 60, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Feb. 21 at Holiday Inn Express LaMalfa Centre in Mentor. See **Kip Molenaar**.

■ **Lorraine M. Fende**, candidate for Lake County treasurer, hosts Families for Fende Spaghetti Dinner 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Feb. 27 at Dino's Restaurant in Willoughby. See **Diane Fox** or **Nick Cindric**.

■ Leap Day event for 11th District Court of Appeals Judge **Mary Jane Trapp**, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Feb. 29 at Willoughby Hills Community Center. See **Kathy DiCristofaro** or **Mike Apicella**.

■ Campaign kickoff party for **Emilee Teresczuk**, candidate for Lake County Clerk of Courts, 5 to 7:30 p.m. March 14 at Frank and Pauly's in Mentor. See **Teresczuk** or **Brian Wollet**.

To view this column online or to leave a comment visit: <http://northernohiolocalpolitics.blogspot.com>.

JHutchison@News-Herald.com
Twitter: @newsheraldjah