

Ad-Hoc Committee to Study Feasibility of Recycling Blount County Government

January 5, 2016
Honorable Jerome Moon, Chairman
Blount County Board of Commissioners
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Maryville, TN. 37804-5906

The Blount County Legislative Body created the Ad-Hoc Committee to Study The Feasibility of Recycling at its February 2015 regular meeting. The committee was charged with the task of investigating the current level of recycling in Blount County and developing recommendations for future recycling efforts where feasible. As chairman, I want to thank all the members of the committee for their participation and all the citizens, private haulers, and public officials that offered their advice and opinions. This is the final report of the committee's findings.

The committee commends Sam Holloway, Solid Waste Manager, for his administration of the landfill. The committee toured the landfill and we were impressed with the care Mr. Holloway and the employees showed toward their responsibilities. It is truly a state-of-the-art operation. The committee learned valuable information about the travails of trying to recycle all materials in one stream, especially glass - even when segregated. Glass is the single biggest obstacle to single stream recycling.

Committee Review and Investigation

The committee reviewed the current state of recycling efforts by both private and public entities. It was clear there is citizen interest in recycling in Blount County. The committee reviewed the findings and discussions from a previous committee on recycling as well as looked at other counties efforts at recycling. The committee discovered that the problems Blount County has encountered in its efforts to recycle are widespread and not unique to Blount County. The committee looked at the possibility of a partnership with Maryville to reopen the recycling center behind the Thompson-Brown house. We acknowledged the problems created by county participation. The volume of material at the center quite simply overwhelmed the site. The committee investigated the cost of manning and sharing the cost of manning and operating the site for all residents of Blount County and possibly placing another site on the west side. Charlene DeSha took the initiative and met with Mayor Mitchell and Maryville officials to discuss the issue. Ms. DeSha and Mallory Leonard, Director of Keep Blount Beautiful, met with Maryville City Manager Greg McClain to determine if a partnership was possible. She also spoke with Dan Cantwell from the city to determine what the cost of a partnership would be. Knoxville has drop-off centers like Blount County but they have invested in their recycling efforts. A centralized drop-off was discussed by the committee as were more accessible bins.

The committee looked at the feasibility of countywide recycling and the benefits and problems associated therewith. It was discovered that there are many private haulers that are making an effort to recycle such as Heaton's Garbage Service on Chilhowee View Road. Heaton provides recycling bins for residential customers yet barely breaks even on their recycling. Smith Recycling and Garbage on Butterfly Gap Loop is also making an effort to recycle materials as are other private companies. Derek Senter from Rock Tenn informed the committee that glass is still recyclable if it is segregated but the cost is becoming prohibitive due the cost of transporting to Atlanta and the low return. Spectra encounters the same problems with glass and single stream. Mr. Senter stated that they had gone from about 250 tons a month to about 80-85 tons a month at the Maryville site when the city closed it to county residents. The excess is now flowing into the landfill and the bulk of the weight comes from glass. It was announced recently that the glass recycling center in Atlanta is now scaling back their acceptance of glass which further exacerbates the problem with recycling glass.

The committee considered applying for a TDEC grant to purchase equipment to process glass as Cumberland County does. With the growth in Blount County's population not waning, the committee discussed the impact of this growth on the landfill. Ms. Leonard stated that of all the counties in the state that pay for recycling or not, only 57% do while 43% don't. In East Tennessee, of the counties similar in size to Blount County, only one other county doesn't fund recycling in any amount.

Bryan Daniels from Blount Partnership stated that he reached out to companies involved in recyclables and could find no one interested in locating or becoming involved in recycling in Blount County at this time. Goodwill Industries is involved in recycling and is a possible outlet if a program becomes viable.

Findings and Recommendation

The committee found that the cost associated with single stream collection including collection bins is cost prohibitive at this time. To do single stream would require purchase or lease of a truck to transport the materials and the possible purchase of a glass crusher to deal with the volume of glass products. Even if the glass were segregated, the outlets for processing and/or processed glass are diminishing.

Many private haulers are actively involved in recycling efforts and it is the committee's recommendation that the county recognize these haulers and inform the public that recycling is available through one of the private haulers. It is further recommended that the county better communicate to the public the locations of existing collection bins.

The committee recommends the Blount County Board of Commissioners request the County Mayor continue with discussions with Maryville officials about a partnership

to reopen to county residents the collection site behind the Thompson-Brown house on Lamar Alexander Parkway. Initial discussions have taken place between the Mayor and the city and an agreement to reopen the site to county residents would provide those residents a site to discard their recyclables when there is no other avenue available. It is recommended that the Mayor bring the information regarding the proposed partnership to the Legislative Body.