



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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Action

The department of public works is recommending a temporary stoppage to accepting electronics at the city Drop-Off Center.

Background

The city has been collecting electronics for recycling for several years. In 2011, it became a state law banning certain electronics from the landfill (we were collecting before then) and at that time the business of electronics recycling became more viable. We are partnered through Waukesha County for this program as they facilitated the bid for electronics recycling for multiple communities.

Last June, our contract with our existing contractor expired and Waukesha County bid out the services to commence July 1st. Through the bidding process, a new company emerged as the winner with a cost neutral proposal. In other words, we are not paying for the pickup and recycling service. In fact, their proposal called for \$.02/lb. revenue for certain electronics back to the city. This company, 5R Processors, began servicing us and the other surround communities at that time.

However, very soon it became evident this company was in over their heads. Despite the bid specifications, they were not prepared to handle the volume of electronics the collective communities were receiving. All sites, including ours, began getting stockpiled with electronics. Over the last 7 months, we and Waukesha County and the other communities have all experienced the frustration of the situation trying to get pickups. The Wisconsin DNR also became aware of the problem with the company in the fall of 2014 and the electronics company is currently suspended as a certified electronics recycler. This suspension does not mean they have to stop taking electronics – they are still accepting – but it does affect their financial situation as a recycler with the state.

Because of this situation, we have been accumulating a massive amount of electronics since the last time the company was able to “catch up” and clear us out completely, which was about Thanksgiving. We have attended meetings with Waukesha County, the other community representatives, the DNR and the President/CEO of this company to try to address the issue. We have been in close contact with them over the last several weeks to try to work on the plan for our next clean up. The effort is going to take several days and involve palletizing the electronics and loading semi-trailers to take them away. At this time, we are expecting this to happen in the next few weeks in February.

We want to allow some time for the clean up effort to take place without gathering more. It’s important to note that all of the other communities such as New Berlin, Pewaukee and Brookfield have already stopped accepting as well.

Once again, an important point to note is that this contractor is operating by a cost-neutral terms, meaning we are not paying for this disposal process at this time. Unfortunately, the reality is that since the state law went in affect and a few years have gone by, the business of electronics recycling has not remained viable and is now a costly endeavor for the companies. Therefore, the outlook is likely that the city or residents may have to begin to fund the recycling/disposal process in the near future to cover the costs. We are exploring our options for future electronics recycling with this in mind. One possibility is for the County to begin hosting massive collection events a few times a year instead of us accepting the electronics regularly, thus taking the burden off of us for stockpiling.

Thank you for your attention to this situation and know that we have been fully aware of it since the beginning and have been doing everything in our power to work with the company and help them fulfill their obligations while maintaining a cost-neutral outcome.

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