

How Local Towns View Trash Crisis

An Observer Roundup

The business of trash, uninviting as it sounds, is among the fastest-growing in the country, generating millions of dollars for newly-emerging corporate giants whose sole concern is helping America get rid of billions of tons of bottles, cans and debris.

Unfortunately for most American communities, the business is the chief victim of its own rapid growth. The universal solution to the problem of solid waste disposal is to bury it, and land for that purpose, a welcome neighbor in few towns, is becoming more and more scarce and expensive as the trash pile mounts.

The problem for Observers is that the business is growing from nuisance to crisis. None, however, will be able to ignore for long the fact that when old dumps fill up, new ones not only cost more but are getting farther and farther away.

THREE CITIES, Garden City, Westland and Lathrup Village, have joined

regionally organized programs of waste disposal. These employ centrally-located transfer stations and huge incinerators to cut down on the bulk of waste and the expense of transportation.

Others use the simple messy and expensive method of hauling undisturbed trash directly to the nearest dumping place.

Westland and Garden City have been the most successful in dealing with the problem. They were among early pioneers in making a means of efficient waste disposal nearly 20 years ago, when they joined the Central Wayne County Sanitation Authority—a five-city coalition which put a two-furnace incinerator into operation in Dearborn Heights in 1954.

Although the facility had to add its third furnace four years ahead of schedule, it has effectively created a substantial savings for taxpayers, costing residents approximately \$8 per household per year—compared to an average of about \$30 in most other cities.

The approximately 1,400

tons of trash which is burned daily in the incinerator is reduced 65-90 per cent in bulk. From there it goes to an 84-acre dump site in Huron Township which Authority Supervisor Virgil Elter estimates will meet space needs beyond 1987.

LATHRUP VILLAGE shares its incinerator with the South Oakland Incinerator Authority, formed in 1951 and joined by Lathrup when it incorporated in 1953.

Rubbish collected by city crews is trucked to a transfer station in Fluy, where larger vehicles are used to transport loads to the incinerator in Madison Heights.

The facility was enlarged in the early '60s and equipped with anti-pollution equipment. Stricter state pollution standards instituted since

then, have resulted in \$1.4 million in additional renovation scheduled for completion next year.

Waste disposal costs Lathrup households about \$26 annually, substantially less economical than the Garden City-Westland system, but still some \$6 cheaper than the cost of surrounding residents in Southfield, which has no incinerator.

The system has been successful in meeting a volume of trash which doubled last year without a significant increase in cost.

SOUTHFIELD AND LIVONIA share the same private trash disposal service, Commercial Removal Co., Southfield.

Commercial's manager, Ron Caramango, 29, commands a fleet of 60 seven-trucks which haul the

collected refuse of several contractors to four or five landfill sites in Wayne and Oakland County.

The distance his trucks must travel to dump their load increases every year, and Caramango says three or four sites closed last year. The company is building relay stations to cut down on transportation costs, but Caramango claims incinerators will be his only real solution.

The service costs Livonia homeowners about \$1.1 million in property taxes annually. Southfield about \$252,000.

THE CITY OF Farmington pays 70 cents a cubic yard to Holloway Construction Co. for the privilege of dumping in its Salem Township landfill.

Holloway is a small-scale example of the money-

making potential of the dump business. It takes in some 2,000 yards (\$1,000) a month from Farmington, and numbers the City of Detroit among its other dumpers.

The land, if properly filled, can be resold as a prime construction site within a few years.

Seven independent contractors take care of the trash output of Farmington Township, some using the same Salem Township landfill. A special township committee is studying present and future waste disposal problems in the fast-growing area.

In Redford Township, nine DPW trucks pick up 150 tons of trash a day, but because local zoning ordinances prohibit landfills (as do those of most communities), the rubbish is disposed of by a commercially-operated transfer station, B&R Disposal Inc.

The company compacts the trash hydraulically before transporting it out of the Township for dumping.

THE MOST frequently suggested solution for equalizing the wide variation in waste disposal costs and keeping them down in the future is to take the burden off local governments and place it on county or regional authorities with the power to acquire landfill sites by the exercise of eminent domain powers.

Oakland County has announced plans to request such authority from the State Legislature, and a preliminary report by a committee studying the problem for the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments suggests a county-wide approach.

The SEMCOG committee, headed by Bloomfield Township Supervisor Homer Case, suggests a state legislation delegating county authorities a condemnation power with tight regulations on landfill operations to insure that property is not made useless.

Acquisition of the property could be paid for with bonds to be retired by income earned by operation of the dumps, the report speculates.

The state Chamber of Commerce has suggested creation of a special state department to help local governments deal with waste disposal problems, and specifically to help them comply with a new state law which requires all counties, cities, villages and townships of 10,000 or more population to submit plans for solid waste management to the state by July 1, 1973.

Mrs. Dumas Must Give Up College Post

Schoolcraft College trustee Mary Dumas resigned from the board this week, leaving the board with two vacancies which must be filled this month.

Mrs. Dumas was elected Wayne County commissioner from Livonia and was sworn into office Wednesday.

Her resignation from the Schoolcraft board was prompted by an attorney general's opinion stating that the two offices are "incompatible."

The opinion from Atty. Gen. Frank Kelley's office says that there is no "conflict of interest," as defined by a public act. It stated, however, that the two offices are incompatible because the county commissioners certify the college's budget.

Although the county doesn't allocate funds to Schoolcraft, it does certify the tax levy.

"I WAS disappointed from the point of view of the college and balance on the board," Mrs. Dumas said. "But I'm going to be busy enough on the county board."

Another vacancy exists on the board because former chairman R. Robert Geake was elected to the State Legislature and resigned his post.

The non-partisan board was split politically. But with Republicans Geake and Mrs. Dumas resigning, Democrats will have an opportunity to pack the board in their favor.

A study session is scheduled at 8 p.m. Jan. 17 to discuss the appointments. It is expected that the appointments will be made at a special meeting following the study session.

STATE SEN. Carl Pursell (R-Plymouth), who was instrumental in getting the

attorney general's opinion, said that the decision was based on a "minor issue."

The question of an elected official serving "one term of office at a time" is more important, he said.

"I think this is the major issue," he said.

"It will be in the best interests of the college and the county that Mary resign to serve the county position which is safeguarded and includes an expense account," Pursell said. "It will let the college appoint a representative who can devote 100 per cent of his time to the college."

SCHOOLCRAFT President C. Nelson Grote praised "the efforts of Sen. Pursell in securing an early opinion."

"I'll permit the board to make some decisions that are timely and in the best interests of the college," Mrs. Dumas said.

She was reluctant to announce her resignation since it left "two vacant seats on the board at this time, with the possible resultant loss of the board and healthy balance which the present board has maintained."

"There are some critical controversial issues which may arise again in the near future, and I only hope that those persons selected to fill the vacancies will have as much sincere concern for the long-range future of Schoolcraft College as I believe I had."

She described her 15 months on the board as "challenging and rewarding."

The two appointments will serve until the June 12 election.

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