

NEWS RELEASE

July 9, 2009

**MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
411 NORTH 5TH ST
SHELTON, WA 98584**

TO: KMAS, KRXY, SHELTON-MASON COUNTY JOURNAL, THE OLYMPIAN,
SHELTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, NORTH MASON CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE, CITY OF SHELTON, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL,
THE SUN

RE: Recycling Ordinance

The County enacted an ordinance in December of last year. The ordinance states that any company collecting garbage from residents will also collect recycling. The intent is to provide the same level of convenience for recycling as for garbage. With this program, residents can reduce disposal, increase recycling, and take advantage of a more efficient, more effective and more convenient service. This model has been successfully implemented across the country, in neighboring counties, and in the City of Shelton.

The County encourages this program, although it has no legal authority to set rates which help recover the costs to provide the service.

There will be a Public Hearing on July 14, 2009 to consider amendments to this ordinance. The proposed amendments are not related to the recent rate notification letter sent out by Mason County Garbage. Below are some answers to the most common questions that have been raised by the notification letter.

What is the difference between Mason County and Mason County Garbage Company?

There are actually three separate agencies at work, each doing their part to create a useful, efficient, effective and fair service for residents. The roles are as follows:
Mason County is your local government, responsible for the ordinance which requires collection services for garbage and recycling.

Mason County Garbage Company is a private company providing collection service to residents and businesses.

Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission is a state government regulatory agency responsible for rate setting.

Each of these is completely independent by law.

You didn't ask me!

Your input is valued; it was the substantial number of requests for this program that motivated the County to develop the ordinance last year. There was a Public Hearing in December when the ordinance was passed. In the prior year, the topic was discussed at length by the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (a public meeting which occurs monthly), who supported the ordinance. In the two years before that, the County, by state law, was writing a Solid Waste Management Plan, which outlines the various options for recycling programs, and recommended a curbside collection program. And it is not too late. There will be a Public Hearing on July 14th, 2009 at 9:30 AM, and written comments will be accepted until August 3rd (including email). In addition the UTC will

accept written comments until July 30th and in person at their Public Hearing on that day.

Everyone pays whether or not they use the service.

I don't like being told what to do, and that I have to pay for it. Why?

Studies have shown that voluntary recycling programs are so inefficient they make it impossible to justify the capital cost of a countywide program. In order to equitably service the entire County, the Utilities and Transportation Commission sets a rate based on the total area and population, as well as equipment costs wages, etc. This reduces the per-user cost by spreading the cost over a larger group, and takes the various factors (such as time, distance, and stops per mile) into consideration. (More on the UTC below.)

The City of Shelton and others have found that people who try the new system find that it works well, and often can reduce the size of can or frequency of collection for their garbage service.

Washington State Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC)

The WUTC is a regulatory agency responsible for setting rates charged by private companies who provide essential services, such as power, water, garbage, recycling, phones, etc. When a private company provides a service, they collect a fee. The fees are authorized by the UTC, based on their investigation into the cost proposal. The County does not have any authority to set rates for collection for garbage or recycling.

Why should I pay if I don't want it?

You can opt out of collection services, and be responsible for your own garbage and recycling. The County offers four sites for self-hauled wastes. The sites in Belfair and Shelton are open every day. The sites in Union and Hoodspoint are open Saturday, Sunday and Monday.

Why should I pay for recycling when I can take it to ___ for free?

When you use the Blueboxes for recycling, you use your time, your vehicle, your bins and your fuel. The word free means these costs are not factored in, but the costs are real. The value of the materials collected does not offset the costs of fuel, driver time, equipment purchase and maintenance. In addition, anyone who has used the Blueboxes knows that items that do not belong are a big problem, and cleaning the sites and the materials is a cost too. The Bluebox program is being phased out because of cost to the County. It has been kept alive due to a lack of alternatives. Curbside recycling is not just an alternative, it has proven to be the most successful method of material recovery and reduced disposal.

What about glass?

At this time the only sites accepting glass are Wilson Recycling and the Shelton Transfer Station (landfill). By the end of this year, all four County sites and Wilson Recycling will accept glass.

Tim Sheldon
Chair

Lynda Ring Erickson
Commissioner

Ross Gallagher
Commissioner