

Community debates trash service changes

BY DIANE POELKER
Assistant News Editor

Kirksville citizens and city officials are talking trash.

The city of Kirksville and Veolia Environmental Services, the city's garbage disposal service provider, hosted a forum to hear resident concerns over a new waste management service proposal last week. City Manager Mari Macomber said the proposed service, which would eliminate yard waste pick-up and increase weekly waste quotas as well as the cost of service has upset some residents.

"We had basically two different groups that were there," Macomber said. "One group, I would say, are those who are good stewards of the resources who recycle [and] compost ... who are concerned about if you allow people to put more trash out, what kind of impact will it have on the recycling program. Then you had another group of people who basically said we don't generate a whole lot of trash, and so why not have the people who generate the trash pay for it as opposed to us."

Macomber said she originally requested a new waste management proposal that would include spring clean-up from current provider Veolia last January. She said her original intention was to out-

source the annual large item disposal service from the city to Veolia in an attempt to free up city crews for other community improvement projects during warm weather. But Macomber said that during the year it took Veolia to respond, additional issues surfaced about the city's waste disposal plan.

"It took over a year to get a proposal," Macomber said. "... As we progressed along, I had been getting complaints from residents and businesses and citizens who have dumpsters where people have been dumping their trash. It's illegal to dump your trash in someone else's dumpster. [The city has] actually had to go in the dumpster because people have said, 'So-and-so is putting their trash in my dumpster.' Pull it out and see if you can find that person."

Macomber said Veolia has proposed upping the weekly household trash quota to include one large item per week plus additional waste filling a 96-gallon container, which would be distributed by Veolia. The curbside recycling program would continue as before. However, Macomber said Veolia also requested a fee increase from \$6 per month to \$10.75 per month as well as an extension of its existing contract to cover the updates, which include new automated trucks to pick up the larger containers.

"One of the things that was discussed was the term of Veolia's contract, which goes through 2010," Macomber said. "So that's a question that was raised at the meeting: If the contract is going to end in 2010, why go through all the hassle of this? One of the things Veolia also asked for was an eight-year extension, which is significant. They asked for that because of the cost of the trucks and the new totes because they'll switch to automated trucks."

Amber Burnam, a Veolia municipal marketing representative, said other elements have factored into Veolia's proposed price increase and contract extension. Burnam said the company has been asking for a fee increase since 2005 in response to rising gas prices and waste disposal fees.

"Disposal costs have risen significantly," she said. "Even though we own our own landfill, waste collection and disposal are two separate entities. We have to pay to dispose of trash."

Burnam said Veolia has begun considering some of the citizens' concerns and wants to factor their opinions into any final plan. Burnam said the proposal was drafted in response to large amounts of waste pileup throughout the city. However, with larger containers, citywide recycling will decrease.

"We're in no way trying to di-



File Photo

Changes to Veolia's trash service would eliminate Spring Cleanup and instead offer residents the option to throw away one large item a week in addition to a 96-gallon container.

Talking trash

Kirksville citizens heard proposals for a renegotiated trash disposal plan with Veolia Environmental Services last week.

Here are the current and proposed plans:

Source: KirksvilleCity.com

Current plan:

- \$6 per month for 33 gallons (40 pounds) of trash per week.
- Additional bags cost \$1 each.
- Free curbside recycling.
- Free yard waste pickup during last week of each month.
- \$6 per year for large item pickup once per year by the city.

Proposed plan:

- \$10.75 per month for weekly trash disposal (in a 96-gallon container provided to households) plus one large item per week.
- Free curbside recycling.
- \$1 per bag of yard waste left at the Kirksville recycling center.

minish the recycling program, but people don't want to take the time to recycle," Burnam said. "Unfortunately, the recycling will probably decrease by half."

Junior Lindsay Allan said Kirksville is facing a tough situation and that perhaps recycling education and action might solve the city's waste problems without

increasing the amount of waste.

"Back at home, where I live, people throw away lots of recyclables when we weren't restricted as to how much trash we could have," Allan said.

Macomber said it's important for citizens to realize that the city has not yet reached an agreement on the waste management

contract. Macomber said she intends to continue investigating what other cities have done and reviewing plans from other waste management companies.

"I think what people need to understand ... we do the trash service not because of individual needs but because of the community needs," Macomber said.

Local agencies benefit from state Rx grants

BY KATHLEEN MEYER
for the Index

This month, low-income residents and seniors might have more resources available to assist with prescription drug costs.

At the end of March, Missouri Attorney General Jay Nixon began dispersing \$630,000 in technology grants from a settlement with Caremark Rx, LLC., to 112 organizations in Missouri. The money will help organizations purchase computer software and other technology needed to communicate with pharmaceutical companies' drug distribution programs.

Dean Valkenaar from Kirksville's Northeast Missouri Community Action Agency said the grants have helped it purchase five laptops and two desktop computers, which replaced older systems. The laptops allow the agency to have multiple locations, and it is in the process of setting up 18 sites.

"The majority of that money is going into buying licenses into a program called RxAssist," Valkenaar said. "RxAssist is an Internet-based program that automatically searches hundreds of programs offered by drug companies to offer free or reduced price medications."

Valkenaar said the RxAssist software is important because it helps people find less expensive prescriptions.

"There's hundreds of programs out there that are offering free or reduced prescriptions," Valkenaar said. "For an individual to go and try and track those down by themselves would be extremely difficult."

Valkenaar, who is the area content service manager, said he thinks the grants will be beneficial in leading people to find lower-cost prescription drugs.

"Community Action's goal is to lift people out of poverty, and any tool we can use to achieve that goal, we wel-

come," Valkenaar said. "There's a lot of people who are paying very high prices for prescription drugs, and provided they qualify income-wise, this may alleviate some of the monthly bills they have on prescription drugs."

NMCAA has programs like Head Start to help the less fortunate but has not offered a prescription drug program before. The agency received \$14,300 from the grant and will not charge a fee for the service.

The Northeast Missouri Rural Health Network, a nonprofit organization, also received grant money totaling \$1,500. The agency offers patient-based programs for uninsured and underinsured people, including referrals to health care programs, transportation services to medical and social service appointments and a prescription drug assistance program.

Glenna Daniels Young, executive director of the agency, said they already had computers and had been using the RxAs-

ist software. She explained that the agency used the grant money to purchase a two-year license renewal for the software.

"Overall it's beneficial to the patients that we serve because it helps ensure that we can keep the program running," Daniels Young said.

The prescription drug assist program charges a \$15-per-year household membership fee and a \$7.50 fee per medication to help offset the cost of staff time. However, Daniels Young stressed that the agency wants to find the least expensive way for residents to get their medications and will point out the possibility of cheaper, generic drugs when possible.

"We try to link them to the lowest cost way to get their med and provide that advice free of charge," Daniels Young said. "We just want to have knowledge of the programs here so we can refer them to where they need to go."

Heartland Retired and Senior Vol-

unteer Program also received funding through the grant totaling \$4,254. The agency specializes in helping retired seniors volunteer through nonprofit organizations in their communities.

Pat Selby, executive director of RSVP in Kirksville, said the agency used the grant money to purchase laptops and printers, as well as a two-year subscription to RxAssist.

Selby said the software makes the process of ordering the prescriptions faster, as does having laptops for the different counties they serve. RSVP does not charge a fee for the prescription drug service.

"All we have to do is bring up their name, and it will bring up their information if they have previously applied for other assistance with us," Selby said. "Instead of going to each pharmaceutical Web site and getting their application, this Web site has made it really easy. I think it's going to be a wonderful tool for the volunteers to use."

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