

Town looking for new place to house transfer station

A consultanting group will present options at a special meeting tonight.

01:00 AM EDT on Wednesday, September 27, 2006

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MIDDLETOWN -- With the town's lease on land housing the transfer station expiring in December, officials are looking for a new home for the town's trash.

"This is a big decision that could potentially be a long-lasting decision," Councilman Louis DiPalma said.

DSM Environmental Services Inc., a Vermont-based consulting group, will present a solid-waste and transfer-station analysis for officials and residents at a special meeting tonight at 6:30.

The firm will lay out various options for trash collection after the town's lease on the Burma Road property, where the town's transfer station is, expires on Dec. 31.

Town Administrator Gerald Kempen said town officials eliminated several locations for a new transfer station after looking at how the neighborhoods would be affected by the elevated noise levels, dust, bright light, and increased traffic that transfer stations often bring.

"Most potential sites had such drawbacks that they really were not feasible," he said.

The Aquidneck Island Planning Commission, which received a grant from the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corp. to finance the study, hired DSM in June. Planning Commission Director Tina Dolen said DSM would present a separate study next month on Portsmouth.

Town Council President Paul Rodrigues said the town might ask the Navy for access to property on another section of Burma Road previously used to store military vehicles. Officials may also seek an extension to the current lease, or hire a private trash collector.

Setting up a joint transfer station with Portsmouth is another option that may help both towns reduce their trash costs, Rodrigues said.

"Basically it all comes down to dollars and cents," he said.

Portsmouth Town Administrator Robert Driscoll said Portsmouth's transfer station is too small to accommodate the town's recycling needs. Residents use a smaller recycling container that fills up quickly, requiring numerous trips to the Johnston landfill at an increased cost.

"We thought it was very worthwhile to take a look with Middletown," he said.

Saying that the lease allowing Middletown access to the Burma Road property was not in its best interests, the Navy informed officials in December that it would not be renewing the town's lease for the area.

For more than 20 years, the town had paid the Navy \$2,500 a year to use the one-acre parcel,

where residents take residential and recyclable trash. The town does not offer curbside trash pickup, and residents wanting the service hire private trash companies.

Giving rough estimates earlier this year, Kempen said that it could cost as much as \$4.03 million to build a new transfer station on land the town purchases. Annual maintenance costs, which include a \$300,000 tipping fee, labor, building maintenance, and administrative costs, could be as high as \$1.03 million.

Kempen said it could cost the town \$1.23 million a year to implement curbside pickup for the town's 5,276 single- or two-family residences. About half those residences currently use the transfer station, which charges \$60 a year, and \$25 a year for the elderly. The rest hire private trash collectors.