

Pickup or delivery? Survey seeks input on trash preferences

By Matt Sheley/Daily News staff

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Want to have input on the way municipal trash services are handled in Middletown and Portsmouth in the future?

Consultants will conduct a survey, sponsored by the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission, at the Portsmouth and Middletown transfer stations Friday and Saturday.

Residents using the transfer stations will be asked questions ranging from how often they use the facilities to how far they must drive to dispose of their garbage, according to Planning Commission Executive Director Tina Dolen. The survey will be conducted by DSM Environmental Services of Ascutney, Vt.

"They're going to be looking at everything," Dolen said. "They'll be talking with people who use both facilities, going over the transfer stations inside and out, riding on garbage trucks and things like that.

"When they're done, they'll know more about our trash habits than we do ourselves," she said.

The trash situation in each municipality has been the subject of much discussion in recent months, with both towns exploring alternatives to save money and improve service.

Middletown has to find a new way to deal with its trash after being told by the Navy the town's longtime lease on the Burma Road property would not be renewed at the end of the year.

In Portsmouth, officials have talked about ways to decrease waiting times and offer more services, particularly in the areas of recycling and yard waste.

With those questions brewing, the nonprofit regional planning commission volunteered to hire an independent consultant to look at the matter and offer suggestions. Previously, Dolen said Newport was contacted and officials said they were happy with their trash services.

Those who participate in the survey will be quizzed about why they use the transfer station,

whether they have contracted with a private curbside hauler and if, in the case of Middletown residents, they would drive to Portsmouth or Newport to dispose of their garbage, according to a copy of the survey.

Middletown Town Administrator Gerald S. Kempen said the results of the survey would help shape the decisions that will be made in coming months.

In the meantime, Kempen said the town plans to sell new stickers to the transfer station for 2006-07 and give a rebate if one is required because the Burma Road station closes before the pass expires.

A sticker for unlimited use of the facility costs \$60 for residents and \$25 for seniors who live in Middletown. The current sticker is good through Sept. 1.

"There are so many variables involved in this process right now and the worst-case scenario is we don't have a plan ready and we have to ask the Navy for an extension," Kempen said. "Until we get to the point where there's a plan, we're just going to handle it as business as usual."

Dolen also said the results of the survey should be informative and help shape future trash collection in both towns.

"Trash isn't something a lot of people focus on, but it's an important part of daily life on the island," Dolen said. "Hopefully this voluntary survey will get people to think about it a little bit more."

TO PARTICIPATE

Consultants will conduct a survey about municipal trash services Friday and Saturday at the following locations:

* Portsmouth transfer station on Hedly Street, 8 a.m.-noon

* Middletown transfer station on Burma Road, noon-4 p.m.