



Solid Waste Advisory Committee

**Recommendations to Borough Council
May 9, 2022**

Agenda

- Solid Waste Advisory Committee Mission & Vision
- Overview of the Borough's Current Solid Waste Program
- Borough Solid Waste Costs and Revenues
- Scope of Committee Analysis
- Key Committee Activities
- Summary of Committee Recommendations
- Detail Supporting Recommendations
- Next Steps
- Appendix: Solid Waste Resident Survey Results

Solid Waste Advisory Committee

Mission & Vision

- The Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) kicked off in January 2022.
- Committee members include Borough Manager Mitchell Stern, DPW Director Doug Edler, Deputy Mayor Khizar Sheikh, Councilwoman Lauren Barnett, Councilman Dan Happer, Environmental Commission Chair Mimi Kaplan, and public members Glen Garvin, Ryan Gorman, and Chad Scherger.
- SWAC's mission is to thoroughly evaluate the Borough's residential waste and recycling programs in preparation for our next solid waste contract.
- SWAC's vision is to implement solid waste programs for collecting and disposing of residential waste and recyclables that meet the needs of the community, with sensitivity to quality and ease of service, cost of service, environmental impact, and community aesthetics.

Overview of the Borough's Current Solid Waste Program

Garbage

- Home-side pickup, once/week collection by hauler
- Green bag “pay-as-you-throw” program

Recyclables

- Home-side pickup, once/week collection by hauler
- Recycling Yard drop-off. See the Borough's [Recycling Guidelines & More Brochure](#) for operating hours and what recyclables are collected.
- The Borough (not the hauler) owns its recyclables

Bulk Trash

- Twice/year Bulk Trash Days – residents drop-off bulk trash at the Borough's Recycling Center

Borough Solid Waste Costs and Revenues

Costs

	2021	2022 budgeted
Contract Costs for Collection	\$ 432,000	\$ 438,000
Disposal “Tipping” Fees	127,645	130,000
Salaries & Wages	16,817	26,422
Recycle Yard Operations Including Brush Removal	31,430	43,050
Recycling	<u>6,934</u>	<u>17,200</u>
Total Cost	\$ 614,826	\$ 654,672

Revenues

	2021	2022 budgeted
Net Green Bag Revenue	\$ 189,705	\$ 163,000
BOE fees	53,256	53,600
Grants and Other	8,525	7,851
Recycling	<u>12,950</u>	<u>-</u>
Total Revenue	\$ 264,436	\$ 224,451

Scope of SWAC Analysis

- Green bag or other “pay-as-you-throw” program for garbage collection – or eliminate this program
- Home-side vs. curb-side collection of garbage and recyclables
- Frequency of garbage collection
- Frequency of recyclables collection
- Dual stream vs. single stream recycling
- Borough vs. hauler ownership of recyclables
- Bulk trash services options
- Recycling Center operating hours

The Solid Waste Advisory Committee developed its recommendations based on several key activities

- ✓ Review of the Borough's current solid waste contract
- ✓ Benchmarking of Borough services vs. those of other Morris County municipalities
- ✓ Review of other municipal solid waste contracts
- ✓ Interview with current hauler
- ✓ Site visit to Mount Olive Transfer Station
- ✓ Discussion with Board of Education regarding the school district's solid waste service needs
- ✓ Review of Solid Waste Resident Survey results

Summary of SWAC Recommendations

- Recommendation 1:** Eliminate the Borough's Green Bag Program; Replace with standard garbage allotment per household
- Recommendation 2:** Maintain home-side collection of garbage and recyclables
- Recommendation 3:** Maintain 1x/week garbage collection; Add option for residents to contract directly with hauler for extra collection day each week
- Recommendation 4:** Move to alternating weekly collection schedule for recyclables (week 1 & 3 commingled; week 2 & 4 paper/cardboard)
- Recommendation 5:** Maintain dual stream recycling and Borough ownership of recyclables
- Recommendation 6:** Replace 2x/year Bulk Trash Days (drop-off at Recycling Center) with 4x/year curbside collection
- Recommendation 7:** Review Recycling Center operating hours

Recommendation 1:

Eliminate the Borough's Green Bag Program; Replace with standard garbage allotment per household

- Benchmarking: Only 10% of Morris County municipalities have a Green Bag or other “pay-as-you-throw” program for garbage. Most towns have a standard garbage allotment per household.
- 2022 Resident Survey: 55% of respondents are “Very Dissatisfied” or “Dissatisfied” with the Green Bag Program vs. 27% who are “Very Satisfied” or “Satisfied.” Dissatisfaction with the program was a “hot topic” in open-ended survey responses. Residents cited the inconvenience of purchasing bags, poor bag quality, and the environmental unfriendliness of double-bagging.
- Other Considerations:
 - Borough employee time spent administering a “pay-as-you-throw” program
 - Extra plastic going into landfills
- \$\$\$ Note: Eliminating the Green Bag Program would necessitate absorbing the lost net revenue from this program in the Borough’s operating budget. Green bag net revenue totals \$163,000 in the Borough’s 2022 budget. However, residents would no longer incur the cost of purchasing green bags.

Recommendation 2:

Maintain home-side collection of garbage & recyclables

- Benchmarking: Mountain Lakes is an outlier in providing home-side collection of garbage and recyclables. Madison is the only other Morris County municipality that offers home-side collection (as a premium add-on, not a base level of service).
- 2022 Resident Survey: 57% of respondents say it is “Very Important” or “Important” to maintain home-side collection vs. 29% who say it is “Not Important” or “Not at All Important.”
- Other Considerations:
 - The Borough’s narrow streets and hilly sections
 - Community aesthetics (garbage and recycling less visible on collection days)
 - Minimizing potential for trash and solid waste containers blowing into roadways

Recommendation 3:

Maintain 1x/week garbage collection; Add option for residents to contract with hauler for extra collection day each week

- Benchmarking: 44% of Morris County municipalities (including Mountain Lakes) provide 1x/week garbage collection. 36% of towns provide 2x/week garbage collection. The remaining 20% of towns do not provide any garbage collection services.
- 2022 Resident Survey: 81% of respondents are “Very Satisfied” or “Satisfied” with Garbage Collection services vs. 9% who are “Very Dissatisfied” vs. “Dissatisfied.” There were several open-ended survey responses requesting 2x/week garbage collection, but it was not a “hot topic.”
- \$\$\$ Note: Moving to 2x/week garbage collection would be costly. SWAC’s recommendation is to maintain 1x/week garbage collection as a base level of service and create the option for residents to contract *directly with the hauler* for an extra garbage collection day each week.

Recommendation 4:

Move to alternating weekly collection schedule for recyclables (week 1&3 commingled; week 2&4 paper/cardboard)

- Benchmarking: 75% of Morris County towns that have a dual-stream recycling program use this collection schedule.
- The Borough's current hauler strongly advises the Borough move to this collection schedule to reduce contamination of recyclables and improve the efficiency of collection.
- Note: Moving to this new collection schedule would require community education to explain the new schedule and the rationale for making this change.

Recommendation 5:

Maintain a dual stream recycling program and Borough ownership of recyclables

- What is the difference between dual stream and single stream recycling? Dual stream recycling requires separation of recyclables into different bins... plastic/glass/metal (commingled) into one bin and paper/cardboard into another bin. Single stream recycling involves placing all recyclables into the same bin.
- Benchmarking: 33% of Morris County towns, including Mountain Lakes, have a dual stream program. 67% have a single stream program. Several towns have recently switched from single stream to dual stream recycling.
- Dual stream recycling reduces contamination of recyclables and results in higher quality materials
 - The Borough owns its recyclables so this increases revenue going to the Borough
 - This is the more environmentally-friendly approach because less waste is going into landfills
- 2022 Resident Survey: 73% of respondents are “Very Satisfied” or “Satisfied” with Recycling Collection services vs. 13% who are “Very Dissatisfied” vs. “Dissatisfied.”
- The Borough’s current hauler is not interested in taking ownership of the Borough’s recyclables and would charge significantly more to do so. In addition, maintaining ownership of recyclables gives the Borough and residents incentive to recycle responsibly.

Recommendation 6:

Replace 2x/year Bulk Trash Days with 4x/year curbside collection

- Benchmarking: Mountain Lakes is an outlier in not providing curbside bulk trash collection services. A significant majority of Morris County municipalities offer this service.
- 2022 Resident Survey: 32% of respondents are “Very Dissatisfied” or “Dissatisfied” with the Bulk Trash Days vs. 28% who are “Very Satisfied” or “Satisfied.” 22% of respondents haven’t used Bulk Trash Days. The desire for improved bulk trash services was a “hot topic” in open-ended survey responses.
- 2022 Resident Survey: 71% of survey respondents would like periodic curbside pickup of bulk trash. 15% would like additional Bulk Trash days.
- \$\$\$ Note: The current cost estimate of adding 4x/year curbside bulk trash collection is \$20k/year for collection plus the cost of disposing the bulk trash. In comparison, most of the cost of the Borough’s Bulk Trash Days program is offset by the fee per vehicle charged for disposal.

Recommendation 7:

Review Recycling Center operating hours

- Benchmarking: The current operating hours of the Borough's Recycling Center are more generous than those of most other Morris County municipalities.
- 2022 Resident Survey: 56% of respondents are “Very Satisfied” or “Satisfied” with the Borough’s Recycling Center vs. 18% who are “Very Dissatisfied” or “Dissatisfied.” 9% of residents haven’t used the Recycling Center.
- The desire for additional operating hours was a “hot topic” on open-ended survey responses. Many residents expressed an interest in additional hours, especially on weekends, as well as a later closing time on weekends.
- The committee will continue to review Recycling Center operating hours and prepare recommendations for Borough Council to discuss at an upcoming meeting.

Next Steps

- Borough Council discussion
- Development of bid specs by Borough Administration
- Public bid process
- Review and award of contract by Borough Administration and Council
- Community education and implementation of new programs and services

Appendix: 2022 Solid Waste Survey Results

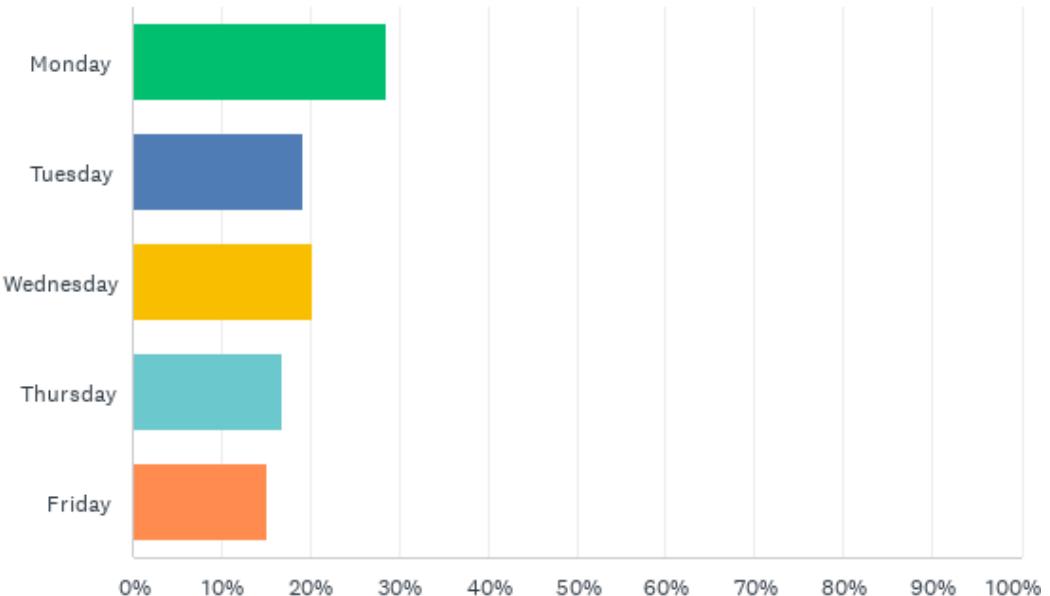
Survey Methodology

- The 2022 Solid Waste Survey was designed by the Solid Waste Advisory Committee. The survey included six questions that required a response and one optional open-ended comment field-box question.
- All adults currently residing in Mountain Lakes (either residential property owner or renters) were encouraged to complete a survey during a two-week period beginning March 22, 2022.
- The survey was publicized via the Borough website, e-mails from the Borough and the School District, and social media.
- 735 residents completed the survey – a response rate of approximately 28% of adult residents of Mountain Lakes.
- The survey received a good distribution of responses from the Borough's five solid waste collection districts.

Q1: What is Your Home Address?

Q2: What day is your trash and recycling collected?

Answered: 735 Skipped: 0

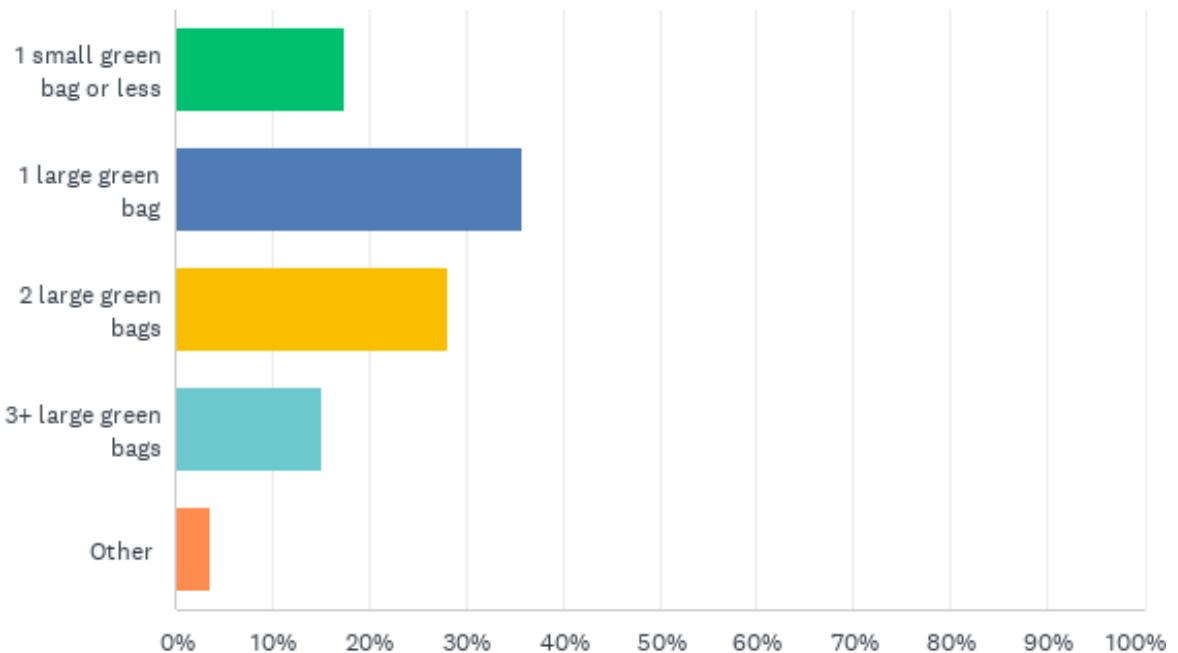


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Monday	210
Tuesday	141
Wednesday	149
Thursday	124
Friday	111
TOTAL	735

These survey questions were asked to help ensure that only Borough residents completed the survey and that there was a meaningful survey response from each garbage collection district.

Q3: How many green garbage bags (for regular trash) does your household typically put out for collection each week?

Answered: 735 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1 small green bag or less	17.41%	128
1 large green bag	35.78%	263
2 large green bags	28.16%	207
3+ large green bags	15.10%	111
Other	3.54%	26
TOTAL		735

Q4: How satisfied are you with the following services?

Answered: 735 Skipped: 0

	VERY SATISFIED	SATISFIED	NEUTRAL	DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	HAVEN'T USED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Garbage Collection	43.87% 322	37.19% 273	9.13% 67	6.13% 45	3.13% 23	0.54% 4	734	4.11
Green Trash Bags	13.06% 96	14.42% 106	16.33% 120	18.10% 133	37.28% 274	0.82% 6	735	2.45
Recycling Collection	33.20% 243	39.75% 291	12.84% 94	7.65% 56	5.33% 39	1.23% 9	732	3.84
Bulk Trash Days (twice/year at Recycling Center)	9.82% 72	17.74% 130	18.69% 137	16.10% 118	15.55% 114	22.10% 162	733	2.24
Recycling Center (Pocono Road facility)	23.19% 170	33.15% 243	17.05% 125	12.14% 89	5.87% 43	8.59% 63	733	3.30

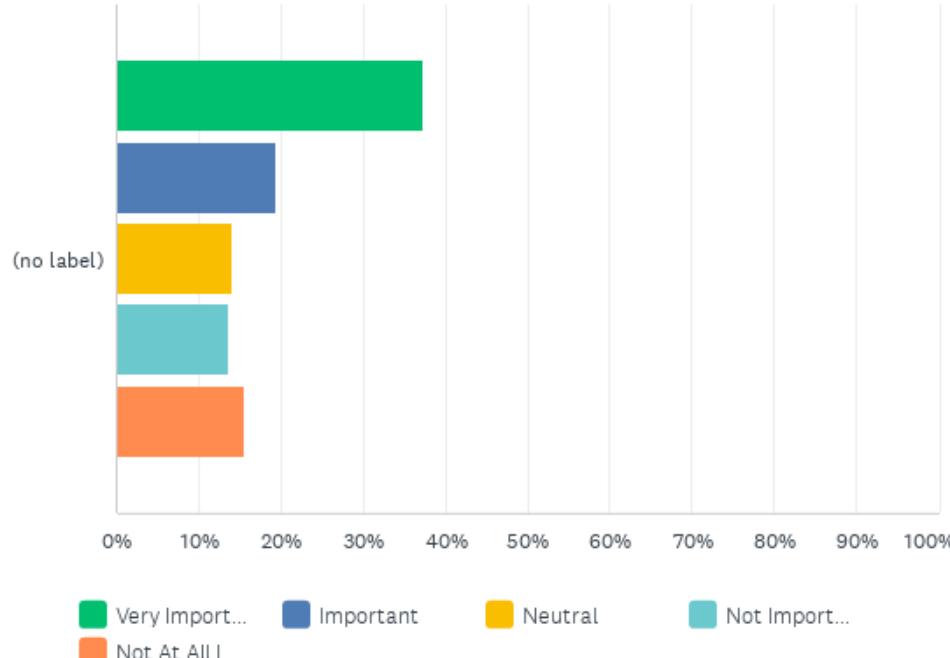
Q5: Do you have any comments you would like to share about these services?

Answered: 490 Skipped: 245

- 67% of survey respondents (490 of 735 respondents) shared comments about the Borough's solid waste services. This was an open-field comment box that was optional to complete.
- There were three "hot topic" issues that respondents commented on:
 1. Frustrations with the green bag program (approximately 270 comments)
 2. Interest in improved bulk trash services (approximately 115 comments)
 3. Interest in expanded Recycling Center hours of operation (approximately 110 comments)
- In addition, there were 28 comments expressing interest in 2x/week garbage. No other issues were identified by a significant percentage of survey respondents.

Q6: How important is it to you to keep homeside collection of your garbage and recyclables, versus moving to curbside collection?

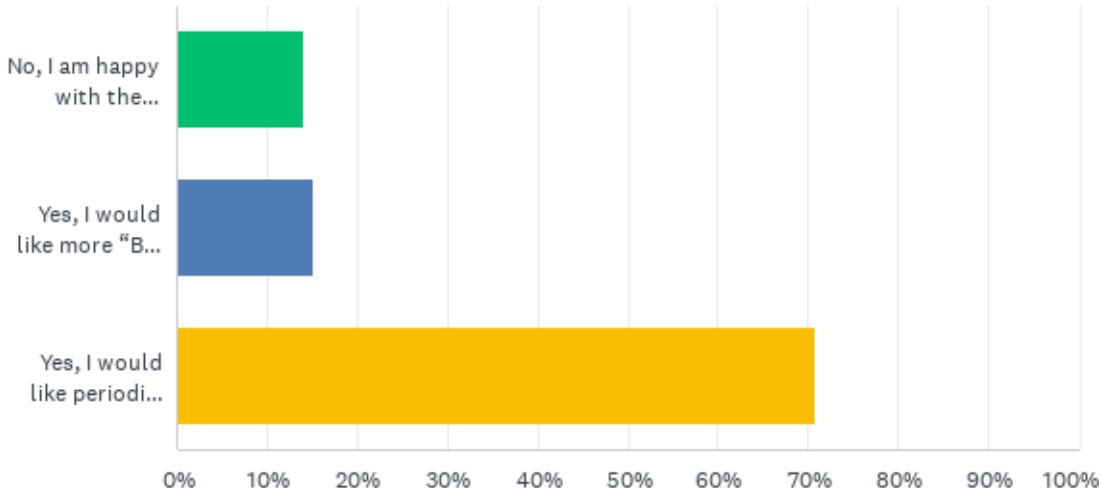
Answered: 735 Skipped: 0



	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NEUTRAL	NOT IMPORTANT	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	37.41%	19.46%	14.01%	13.61%	15.51%	735	3.50
	275	143	103	100	114		

Q7: Would you like additional options to dispose of bulk trash?

Answered: 735 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
No, I am happy with the current system	14.01% 103
Yes, I would like more "Bulk Trash Days" at the Recycling Center	15.24% 112
Yes, I would like periodic curbside pickup of bulk trash from my home (e.g. quarterly)	70.75% 520
TOTAL	735