Seymour Trash Reduction Pilot Community Champions Dinner

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Funding provided by the Sustainable Materials Management Grants Program administered by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)
Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG)
Christine - Environmental Planner
Steven – Environmental Planner
Working with state & local partners on waste management
Connecticut is in a waste crisis.

• As much as 40% of our waste is shipped out of state, due to a lack of capacity. That means more taxes, more emissions, and an uncertain future.

• Our waste-to-energy incinerators are aging. All CT incinerators are past their 30-year lifespan.

• Fees are skyrocketing. DEEP predicts the average tip fee could be over $120 per ton in just the next few years.
About the Program

- Sustainable Materials Management (SMM) Grant funded by Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection
- Focused on the Monday trash pickup route (about 1,100 homes)
- Two key components:
  - Organics diversion (composting)
  - Unit-based pricing
Households received a 9-month supply of green and orange bags.

**Orange bags are for trash. Green bags are for food scraps.**

Encouraging households to limit themselves to two orange trash bags (30 gal total) and one green food scrap bag (8 gal) per week.

Separating food scraps allows them to be sent to an anaerobic digestor or composting facility, where they can be turned into energy or soil amendment. **This costs less than disposing of them along with waste.**

- If contamination rates are low, this will save taxpayer money.
Before you bag it - Unpackage!

Green bags are for "naked food" only - no plastic, boxes, cans, packages, etc.
To understand unit-based pricing, let’s look at how Seymour pays for residential trash services right now…

**Unit-Based Pricing**

That $1.4 million is split among Seymour taxpayers, and is paid through property taxes.

So your “share” of the trash fee is calculated by:

1. the total cost of everyone’s trash, and
2. your share of that total cost based on how your property has been Assessed.
Could you imagine paying for electricity this way? Why would you bother turning off your lights when you leave the room, if that doesn’t impact how much you pay?

Unit-based pricing imagines a different system.
UBP would take the waste disposal cost out of your taxes, and put it into a per-bag charge.

It’s the “electricity bill model.” You pay for the trash you throw away, rather than paying for your share of the town’s average.

Puts you in control of your waste costs. Save money by reducing, reusing, and recycling!

The per-bag charge is hypothetical – this would only be implemented if Seymour voted to implement a permanent program.
Without Unit-Based Pricing

$200/yr thru taxes + bag cost

With Unit-Based Pricing

$75/yr thru bags

$325/yr in bags
Program Mechanics

1. Residents separate material types at home into color-coded bags.
2. All bags go into the same curbside cart.
3. All material goes into the same truck on the same collection route.
4. Materials are unloaded and separated at the transfer station or sort facility.
5. Material is sent to the AD facility or WTE facility.
• What happens if I run out of bags?

Your free box gives you enough to use 2 orange trash bags/week and 1 green food scrap bag/week. If you run out of bags, you can purchase more at a local retailer. We are working with retailers right now to get the bags stocked.

• Will my food scraps attract rats/bears/critters?

Remember that separating your organic food waste into its own green bag *does not* involve creating any new food waste. So if you didn’t have an issue with this before the pilot program, you shouldn’t have an issue with it now! Be sure to keep your green food scraps bag in a sealed container (whether that’s your trash can or another container in your kitchen). Put the green food scraps bag out with the trash each week to be co-collected!
• Has this sort of program been successful in other communities?

Unit-based pricing and organics diversion is being done all over the country and all over the world! From Minnesota to Taiwan, we have seen these programs effectively reduce waste and save money.

• How can I reduce my trash, to get down to 30 gallons a week?

Separating out your food waste will already reduce your trash. Consider donating items instead of throwing them out (like old textiles), buying reusable items, and hitting RecycleCT.com to learn more about what’s recyclable.
FAQs

What happens if this program becomes permanent?

If the pilot data justifies a permanent program, here’s what may change:

• The fee for waste disposal could be transferred (completely or in part) from property taxes to a **per-bag charge**. Residents would pay for each bag they use. That means if you **make less garbage, you pay less money**!

• Seymour may decide to enforce the use of these bags.

• Data suggests that a permanent program could **save Seymour taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars** annually.

This is all hypothetical! We won’t know for sure what a permanent program looks like until Seymour leadership puts a proposal on the table.
Program Goals

- Mitigate rising costs, save taxpayer $
- Reduce trash & pollution
- Collect feedback & data to determine whether this program should become permanent
Questions? Ideas?
Feedback
Has it been clearly communicated what goes in each bag? How are the bag size & quality?
Feedback: Operations

How has food waste collection been going?
Any issues with odors/animals?
Feedback: Operations

Is the program running smoothly (curbside collection, bag delivery)?
Feedback: Operations

How can we build support among community leaders to transition this program to permanence?

Or

What would need to change about the program for you to support permanence?
What is the best way to reach residents?
Feedback: Messaging

Is it clear *why* we are doing this?
How can we better educate?
Are the educational material you’ve seen so far (flyers, website) been clear & accessible?
Are you using the app?
Is it useful?
Next Steps
You are now Community Champions!

1. Participate.
   Separate your food scraps, reduce your waste, improve your recycling.

2. Spread the word.
   Tell other community groups, friends, & neighbors about the pilot program.

3. Give feedback:
   What is working well? What isn’t? What should we adjust to gain broader support?
Keeping up the momentum

• Spread the word!
• Speak up where there’s misinformation or confusion
• Follow NVCOG, the Town of Seymour, ReduceTheTrashCT, community groups
• Bring this message back to other groups you’re part of (PTA, Girl Scouts, Garden Club…)}
@NVCOGREDUCETHETRASH

REDEUCETHETRASHCT.COM/SEYMOUR

HOW DOES THE TRASH REDUCTION PILOT PROGRAM WORK?

HOW DO I GET MY FREE BAGS?

WILL THE TRASH REDUCTION PILOT PROGRAM CHANGE WHAT CONTAINERS I USE FOR TRASH?

WHAT IF I NEED ADDITIONAL BAGS?
Questions?
Thank you for joining!

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