



Rushern L. Baker, III
County Executive

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

February 8, 2018

The Honorable Dannielle M. Glaros
Chair
Prince George's County Council
14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive
Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772

RE: CR-98-2017

Dear Chair Glaros:

On behalf of the County Executive, this letter responds to the request of Council Resolution CR-98-2017 to revisit the merits of once a week refuse collection in Prince George's County, and to prepare a report to the County Council providing the following information:

- 1) Information about how once a week refuse collection has impacted the Solid Waste Fund and its operation;
- 2) The number of calls and data from 3-1-1 on constituent complaints and concerns since the inception of the once a week refuse collection;
- 3) Any concerns or comments relating to the inability of County residents to get County issued totes; and
- 4) The fiscal impact and ramifications of returning to twice a week refuse collection.

Solid Waste Fund Impact

The Solid Waste Fund is supported by fees that residents pay on their tax bills. The fund had been in a downward spiral with deficits up to \$9 million a year, and projected to grow beyond \$12 million within five years. Even though this fund had accumulated a surplus in the past, the constant deficits eroded this surplus to the point where The Department of the Environment (DOE) was faced with the difficult decision of reducing expenditures, raising the fees that support this fund or reducing spending in the general fund (and therefore affecting public safety, social and other services) to subsidize it. The Solid Waste Fund also pays for blight removal, towing abandoned vehicles, code enforcement, and litter pickup; services that we all agree are beneficial to the County. The removal of the extra day of refuse collection is saving approximately \$6.4 million a year and has stabilized the fund, consequently negating the need for an increase in fees or other cuts in vital government services.

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Constituent Complaints and Concerns

The idea of once a week collection originated in part from citizens whom, in the course of budget listening sessions hosted by the County Executive, expressed a desire to change to once a week trash pickup in order to save money, promote recycling and to bring our County in alignment with the practices of almost all of our neighboring counties. As we rolled out the Collections Overhaul Proposal, our team crisscrossed the County to engage residents. In addition, every resident impacted by this change was sent a postcard, explaining why this change was made; two door hangers were distributed to every house and a website was created so that people could look up their new trash collection service day. We also conducted dozens of information sessions and briefings with community groups and leaders. In every instance, after we presented the justification and answered questions, opposition was negligible. While residents did not always agree, they overwhelmingly understood the need to make a change for the long term health of the County's finances and our environment.

While we did receive questions and concerns from residents during the transition that began on May 2, 2016, after reaching a point of stabilization, complaints about the policy received through the 3-1-1 Call Center as well as written correspondences to us have been very low. Service complaints are also low. Our County residential collections service provides three pickups - for trash, recycling and yard trim - to approximately 164,000 residents every week, or nearly 2 million collections per month. In June 2016, the 3-1-1 Call Center received 1,466 complaints of valid missed collections (.0007 percent of all collections). Over the past year, the average number of valid missed collections per month is 570, or .0003 percent, of all collections. The contract is structured to give haulers four hours within which to pick up missed collections or be subject to a fine. Fines have decreased from 798 in July 2016 to 75 in December 2017. The Department of the Environment will continue to work with the County haulers to improve residential collections service.

County Toters

One of the critical improvements to our refuse collection program concerns sanitation. For several decades, our County had not distributed a secure, standard industrial trash receptacle for residents. Open, unsecured trash cans of varying sizes, in addition to plastic bags, were the norm; wildlife regularly disturbed the garbage causing litter in residential neighborhoods. The new improved program provides an industrial strength, wheeled 64- gallon toter with an attached lid to secure trash, controlling wildlife and litter. Concerns such as garbage odors can be easily addressed by using plastic bags that are then tied. Overall, we are better controlling trash from a sanitation perspective than ever before.

After the initial rollout of nearly 150,000 totes, all of which have now been distributed to homeowners, orders are being placed via 3-1-1 at a rate of about 200 month. All orders received through January 26, 2018, have been delivered to homeowners.

Ramifications of Returning to Twice/Week Collection

Operationally, the need for a second day collection is not supported as the amount of trash tonnage per household has been steadily decreasing over the last 20 years. In the 1970's Prince George's County had two collection days with all collected materials destined for the landfill. Currently, we have yard waste and recycling pickups, which now constitute more than two-thirds of the residential waste stream. Resident now have three pickups every week, and the percentage of trash continues to diminish as our residents recycle more. Our residents are producing less trash than ever- and it appears we will continue to produce even less in the years ahead. Maryland Department of Environment has announced that our County has become the #1 jurisdiction in the State of Maryland for recycling and waste diversion, with an increasing majority of our waste stream being re-purposed rather than landfilled. Not only is this good policy for the environment, but diverting waste to recycling also saves tax dollars. In addition, the provision of an extra day of trash pickup would increase an extra day of collections inspection staff workload. Finally, the Solid Waste Fund would stabilize by saving approximately \$6.4 million a year.

Once-a-week trash pickup is now a recognized best management practice. Virtually every jurisdiction from Manassas, Virginia to the Maryland/Pennsylvania line has moved to once-a-week trash collection, including many of our own municipalities such as Hyattsville, Greenbelt and Forest Heights. By making this change, we have joined Baltimore City, the District of Columbia, and the counties of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Howard, and Montgomery, as well as, most of Northern Virginia.

A Better Alternative for Collections – Curbside Compost Collection

Even with our impressive recycling number, approximately 75% of the material still going into the landfill today is recyclable or compostable. More than 31% of this material is organic, primarily food scraps. To help address this issue, DOE has launched a curbside food scrap collection pilot program that provides an additional service to resident in the manner that environmentally and economically sustainable. The pilot has been launched in the Peppermill, Carnody Hills, Wilburn and Fort Washington communities with 125 participants. We suggest that the next evolution in our collections should be toward countywide curbside compost collection, rather than backward to an additional trash pickup.

The Honorable Dannielle M. Glaros
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If you have any questions about this report, please contact our Director, Department of the Environment, Mr. Adam Ortiz at 301-883-5812.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry L. Stanton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "B".

Barry L. Stanton

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DOE

COUNTY COUNCIL OF PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND
2017 Legislative Session

Resolution No. CR-98-2017
Proposed by Council Member Toles
Introduced by Council Members Toles, Harrison, Franklin, Taveras,
Turner, Davis and Patterson
Date of Introduction November 14, 2017

RESOLUTION

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A RESOLUTION concerning

Refuse Collection

For the purpose of expressing the County Council's support to encourage the County Executive to revisit the matter of refuse collection and prepare a report to review the feasibility of one day a week refuse collection.

WHEREAS, pursuant to Charter Section 402, the County Executive's powers, duties, and responsibilities include, but shall not be limited to signing or causing to be signed on the County's behalf all contracts including contracts for goods and services; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to County Code Section 21-119.01, the Council made a statement of policy and legislative findings that the regular, uninterrupted, and efficient removal of refuse from residences within the County is necessary to prevent nuisances, contagious diseases and vermin; the need to provide efficient, uninterrupted refuse collection service exists throughout the County; and to ensure the continuity of efficient refuse collection services and thereby to protect and promote the public safety, health, comfort and welfare; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to County Code Section 21-119.01, the Council determined it was necessary 1) to provide for limitations on the number of residences which may be served by any one contractor; 2) to provide for the bidding, award, and extension of contracts for the provision of refuse collection services; and 3) to authorize the Purchasing Agent to extend or rebid refuse collection contracts in appropriate circumstances; and

WHEREAS for many years the residents of Prince George's County have become accustomed to twice a week refuse collection; and

WHEREAS, the recent change to once a week refuse collection has created hardship which

1 includes environmental concerns for many of the County's residents; and

2 WHEREAS, there has been no definitive study by the County of the merits of a once a
3 week refuse collection; and

4 WHEREAS, there is a need for the County to revisit twice a week refuse collection.

5 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the County Council of Prince George's
6 County, Maryland, that the Council strongly encourages the County Executive to revisit the
7 matter of refuse collection and prepare a report that generates the following:

8 1) information about how once a week refuse collection has impacted the Solid Waste
9 Fund and its operation;

10 2) the number of calls and data from 311 on constituent complaints and concerns since the
11 inception of the once a week refuse collection;

12 3) any concerns or comments relating to the inability of County residents to get the
13 County issued totes; and

14 4) the fiscal impact and ramifications of returning to twice a week refuse collection.

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the report shall be submitted to the County Council on
16 or before February 1, 2018.

Adopted this 12th day of November, 2017.

COUNTY COUNCIL OF PRINCE
GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND

BY: _____

Derrick Leon Davis
Chairman

ATTEST:

Redis C. Floyd
Clerk of the Council