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Brentwood takes 'green' steps

City may keep Environmental Advisory Board

By Bonnie Burch, Kevin Walters and Jill Cecil Wiersma • THE TENNESSEAN • June 2, 2010

Brentwood has taken a major step in addressing recycling and other environmental concerns that range from water usage to greenspace preservation to energy conservation.

With a unanimous vote, the City Commission passed a first reading last week to establish a permanent Environmental Advisory Board, which will operate similar to other city committees such as the Historic Board and the Tree Committee. A final vote on the board is scheduled for the June 15 City Commission meeting in the Brentwood Municipal Center.

This board won't be in charge of making policy. But the nine members, who will be appointed in August, will make recommendations and give input into potential environmental projects and programs. The new board also will facilitate volunteer activities in several areas including recycling.

The city doesn't handle garbage pickup, but some private trash companies do offer curbside recycling. The county operates the recycling center bins on Wilson Pike next to the fire station.

The new committee is the evolution of the Environmental Quality Coordinating Committee, which began as an ad hoc group that made suggestions in how the city could prioritize their environmental issues and encourage recycling.

Bert Bosse, who served on the original environmental committee, said he has two children who taught him a lot about "sustainability and recycling."

"People are really there. They want to do something. But they just need a little bit of help," he said. "I think this environmental committee that you are looking at could serve as a focal point (so) people who have questions can come to it. We're not trying to mandate changes. We're just trying to disseminate information through an educational manner."

Franklin readies for curbside recycling

Franklin's recycling plans are more advanced. In a little more than a month, Franklin kicks off its first-ever curbside recycling program — and the only one operated by a Williamson County city.

While Franklin residents have clamored for curbside recycling for years, the question remains whether they'll buy, and use, the blue bags for their recycling when the city's recycling trucks rumble through neighborhoods for the first time July 12.

Recycling cardboard and aluminum obviously means less waste in the landfill and greater awareness of the sustainability effort. Environmental concerns aside, Franklin city officials need participation to help the bottom line at a crucial juncture. Franklin aldermen are in the midst of approving the third city budget cuts in two years.

They spent \$240,000 this year to lease three "mini-packer" trucks to make weekly residential recycling pickups. If the program is successful, aldermen believe Franklin could reduce how much taxpayers pay to haul garbage, though no specific figures have been set. Franklin, which pays a \$25-a-ton tipping fee to dump its garbage in a Murfreesboro landfill, might save as much as \$83,000 annually if residents were to recycle an estimated 3,333 tons.

The blue bag pickup will occur on customers' normal garbage pickup day.

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In addition to promotion on the city's website, mailers in water bills and brochures, about 5,000 blue bags and brochures were sent home with Franklin Special School District students at the end of the year. A brochure and a blue bag will be included on every city rollaway container on residents' regular pickup later this month.

Promoting the program cost \$10,250, which included a \$5,183 state Department of Environment and Conservation grant. Part of the promotion involves the creation of Buddy Blue Bag, a kid-friendly mascot who'll be making public appearances to promote the program at schools and elsewhere.

Local retailers — including local chain supermarkets and "big box" retailers — will carry the blue bags, which are also recyclable.

Spring Hill recycling contract up for vote

In Spring Hill, residents recycled 235 tons in the last year through a partnership with Maury County that is now under consideration for renewal.

The city's contract for the recycling center on Stephen P. Yokich Parkway ends this month, and the Board of Mayor and Aldermen are expected to vote on a second year at its next meeting June 21.

Last year, board members initially voted down the request to start the partnership with Maury County. County Commissioner Glen Hasse asked them to reconsider, saying the city's \$1,350 investment would be more than offset by a possible \$23,721 in annual landfill fee savings with residents recycling.

"I don't think it will take much prompting this year," Hasse said. "I hear nothing but good things about it. It looks like it's going to come close to the biggest recycling center we have. People seem to be very happy, and it's very well used."

Hasse said he has submitted a request to City Hall for a new contract. Likewise, he said he's asking the Maury County Commission to vote on a contract this month.

Last year, Maury County residents recycled 3,383 tons through different sites, according to Maury

County Solid Waste. Of that, 115 tons came from Spring Hill residents. Hasse said he believes there's opportunity for participation in the city to grow.

"I guess getting more word out about it is the best we can do," he said. "I've heard virtually no criticism. Everything has been good."

Within the first month, participants had dropped off nearly 20 tons of cardboard, plastic, glass, steel and aluminum cans, reducing the amount of garbage that goes to the waste management facility in Camden.

Hasse hadn't had a chance yet to see if Spring Hill would realize the savings he projected, but he said he's sure board members and residents consider it a worthwhile venture. He based the estimated savings on the county's participation in recycling, which averages 67.4 pounds per person each year.

City Finance Director Jim Smith said the budget draft for 2010-11 includes money to continue operating the center.

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