**Frequently Asked Questions About Why New London Is Considering a SMART (SAVE MONEY AND REDUCE TRASH) Waste Management Strategy**

Q. Aren’t we already paying for our household waste disposal through our property taxes?
A. Yes, but a significant portion of that cost is also heavily subsidized by the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resource Recovery Authority (SCRRRA). It is important to understand that the subsidy is being exhausted and New London will experience dramatic increases in disposal costs if it does not reduce trash volumes. Currently your trashed is picked up by the city and delivered to a waste-to-energy facility in Preston that was opened in 1992 by SCRRRA. It is a cooperative of 12 communities in Southeast CT, including New London. The State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is predicting a “dire capacity gap” by 2024 for disposing municipal waste. DEEP anticipates that the State will be required to increase the amount of waste shipped out of state, perhaps up to one-third of all waste (1.23 million tons per year). This will greatly increase costs. Currently, New London’s disposal costs are heavily subsidized by SCRRRA, but this regional subsidy will eventually run out and the Preston facility will reach the end of its useful life. The more we reduce waste the longer the subsidy will be available to the city.

Q. Will tax bills go down if the City switches to the SMART (Save Money and Reduce Trash) system?
A. Not necessarily, but a switch to SMART would provide the City Council with that alternative and it will at the very least help slow their increase. The goal is to prevent the predicted increases in the cost of trash disposal from forcing tax increasing in the future. With tipping fees anticipated to rise significantly in the future, the city has three options, raise taxes to pay for increased tipping fees, cut other municipal services to offset for the increased cost of trash disposal, or implement a program like SMART to better manage our municipal waste.

Q. Why should a taxpayer have to pay for bags when garbage collection is paid for with property taxes?
A. The PAYT program helps taxpayers because it enables the City to pay for the cost of trash disposal at the Preston incinerator using proceeds from the sale of the bags instead of using property tax proceeds. The SMART program turns trash into a utility, like water, sewer and electricity. Each household pays for the disposal of its own trash so that the City’s limited tax base will no longer be forced to subsidize the disposal of a non-taxpayer’s trash.

Q. Won’t the Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) program encourage illegal dumping?
A. The PAYT program has not resulted in an increase in illegal dumping in the communities that have implemented this approach. For example, Worcester, the second largest city in New England has used a PAYT program for the past 25 years without experiencing any increase in illegal dumping. Hundreds of PAYT programs running in Northeast communities as well as thousands of other programs across the US have consistently validated this fact.

Q. Will this program result in increased costs for residents to dispose of household waste?
A. No. New London’s current waste disposal program costs each taxpayer approximately $247 per year. Trash collection is paid out of the City’s operating budget and subsidized by property taxes. Under a SMART program, the cost to each taxpayer through the operating budget decreases to about $159 per year. There is an additional cost to each household, on average, of about $52 per year for the trash bags. (The average home will use one 33 gallon bag per week). It is important to understand that each household unit will be required to participate. This means that the cost of trash disposal is more equitably shared by the community and not merely borne solely by the taxpayers. Even those households that do not pay property taxes, because of various exemptions under State law, will be required to participate in the PAYT program.

Q. Will we see a hefty tax reduction if the SMART waste program is adopted in New London?
A. No. But the PAYT program will prevent dramatic increases in taxes to cover rising costs of trash disposal in the future. If we do not find an approach to address the increasing cost to dispose of our waste, the city will have to find another way to pay for the anticipated $645,000 cost increase to dispose of our trash.

Q. Won’t this program cause an increase in disease carrying rats since people will just allow trash to accumulate?
A. No. Other cities that have adopted a PAYT program have not experienced any increase in rodent or animal infestation. Currently our Public Works do a meaningful job of collecting our trash to ensure rodent infestation is kept to a minimum and nothing in this program is intended to interfere with those efforts.

Q. Why not simply increase the City’s recycling effort to reduce the amount of trash?
A. Currently our recycling rate is 14%. The State’s goal is a recycling rate of 60% by 2024. The SMART program has been identified as a proven method of increasing recycling and decreasing trash. The program is expected to increase the City’s annual recycling rate to 38% and to reduce our annual trash volume by 44%. The program is self-policing since each household has a financial incentive to limit trash creation and maximize recycling.

For additional information about how this program will help the environment and reduce waste removal costs for the City of New London, please view this video about the program:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4hJ7cJ65iU>