

Council says no to full bag-tag system

Owen Sound Sun Times

October 16, 2013

By Rob Gowan

The Town of South Bruce Peninsula has decided against implementing a full bag-tag system, opting instead to explore other waste diversion initiatives.

Council on Tuesday turned down a recommendation to implement a full bag-tag garbage collections system for 2014 so that public works manager Tom Gray could produce an accurate budget reflecting the additional revenue from bag tags. Instead council asked that Gray bring costs forward on further landfill diversion and recycling programs during 2014 budget deliberations.

Coun. Janice Jackson suggested the town look at implementing a green bin program for kitchen compost. She would also like to see an educational program implemented to emphasize the importance of waste diversion.

"I would love to see it in this municipality. I think we would divert an awful lot of our garbage by implementing a green box system," Jackson said. "We have asked our manager of public works to come back with a report on the cost of implementing that in South Bruce Peninsula."

The town currently allows each property to place one bag of garbage to be picked up free each week. Additional bags require a tag, which cost \$1.50.

Gray wanted the price of the tags to be set at \$2 under a full bag-tag system.

Jackson said she doesn't support a full bag-tag system as garbage pickup is something already covered by property taxes.

"I just feel like we would be double dipping," said Jackson.

"We do have issues we are facing in diverting some of our garbage, but I think we have to resolve that in other ways. I don't think charging more money to solve the problem is the way to go."

Gray's report said the revenue from bag tag sales, landfill tipping fees and recycling was significantly less than projected, with the town anticipating an operating deficit of just over \$1.1 million. In 2012, the town had an operating deficit of just under \$500,000 in waste diversion and garbage disposal.

According to Gray's report, going to a full bag-tag system where each bag tag cost the recommended \$2, would generate a projected revenue of \$390,000.

Gray's report also that a full bag-tag system would significantly decrease waste going into the landfill and increase recycling efforts, thus extending the life of the landfill, which is filling up fast. While there is no firm date for when it will be at capacity, a 2009 consultant's report estimated it would be by 2019.

Council was told that within the next couple of years the province is expected to mandate waste diversion rates of at least 50%. South Bruce Peninsula is currently sitting at 24%, but Jackson feels with the right recycling programs, that target can be achieved.

"I think that hitting 50% is very doable if we implement a green (bin) program," said Jackson.

"Without a green (bin) program that is a really tough battle."