

Grass and Weeds at Recycling Convenience Center

With the Covid-19 pandemic unfolding across the country earlier this year, the township took unprecedented steps to protect the staff and the public. Municipal services were curtailed, the municipal building was closed to the public, and meetings quickly switched to a virtual setting versus the preferred in-person method of operation. While other towns across the state and nation were doing much of the same things, Chesterfield was also taking the time to address some much-needed improvements to the recycling convenience center.

Improvements included creation of better containment bins, security gates to protect against unlawful dumping, security cameras to monitor the area and gather details about unlawful dumping, and signage to better inform the public about the site.

Unfortunately, at the same time these improvements and the closings were taking place, the county facility was closed and the township had no outlet where materials could be disposed or recycled. This meant the closing of our site was going to be extended beyond a timeframe we would have preferred. All of these things could not have happened at a worse time as people were home with more time available for projects and with no outlet to dispose of items that were permitted in the past.

As the township began to loosen scheduling restrictions for the recycling convenience center, the Township Committee was faced with finding ways to contain costs for disposal of grass and similar materials. It is important to note that these materials are not recycled in Burlington County and therefore, they are considered trash. Since handling and disposal of grass by a township is a very costly endeavor that is only made necessary by the desires of a portion of residents who choose to bag their grass, the township determined it was best to move away from accepting these items at the recycling convenience center. Many factors come into play when making such a change. One such factor is the fairness of spreading the expense among all residents for a service that was only being utilized by a portion of homes with the balance of owners using other at-home methods to deal with grass clippings. In addition to dealing with costs of disposal, the township was actually working toward ensuring the continued availability of the recycling convenience center. This is because the center is only permitted to accept materials that are recycled. As stated prior, Burlington County only accepts grass as trash and does not have a mechanism available for recycling the material. Because grass is trash, it cannot be brought to the recycling convenience center which is specifically set aside for the purpose of collecting and transporting recyclable materials. It should be noted there are substantial state regulations that address grass recycling in compost facilities and these regulations are far-too-great to comply with for a community like Chesterfield. These regulations are what prevent the township from accepting grass collection at the facility.

Prior to issuing this notice today, the township has been asked multiple times to accept grass and weeds at the recycling convenience center. This practice will not return due to the reasons stated above. However, the township is aware that some of the contracted waste haulers who service our residents will accept grass as trash and some others will not. We are currently working on methods to communicate to these haulers that the waste stream in the township should be considered to contain grass clippings and weeds. The township has no authority regarding your private haulers and we will not meddle in your private contracts with the haulers, but we will definitely provide the facts to them on our residents' behalf.

We know this message contains a great deal of information and we appreciate the residents who take the time to review the details. We also want our residents to understand that we are listening and continually

trying to better accommodate community based needs. Admittedly, the township should have communicated closings and policy changes much better than what occurred and for those shortcomings we apologize. We are going to be sure that does not repeat when making similar changes which may be necessary from time to time. Our goal is to use information sources like the Township Website and official Township Facebook page as key sources of information for our residents. If you are reading this message you have probably already “liked” us on Facebook or you watch our website for updates. Please continue to do so and share these two information sources with your friends and neighbors so they can also stay up-to-date with the most relevant information the township has to offer.