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Fitchburg looks to change trash pickup

By Michael Hartwell, mhartwell@sentinelandenterprise.com

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FITCHBURG -- An ordinance to drastically overhaul the city's trash pickup showed preliminary support by a vote of 6 to 3, last week at the May 11 City Council meeting. A binding vote will take place Tuesday at the 7:30 p.m. council meeting.

If passed, the ordinance will provide residents with wheeled carts for trash and recycling, impose a fee on some large apartment buildings and end the free curbside pickup of large items like furniture.

"The goal is to help clean up the city," said Steve Curry, director of the Fitchburg Health Department. He said the new system would encourage users to recycle more of their waste, thus reducing garbage, keep trash off the streets and save money in operating costs.

Each household would receive two carts; The green trash cart holds 64 gallons and the blue recycling cart holds 96 gallons.

"It produces the opposite image we've had," said Curry. "The recycling holds more and the trash holds less."

To purchase two carts for each household would cost the city \$135,000, said Curry. That's \$50 a cart.

Curry said the city is already deep in a multi-year contract with Waste Management, Inc. and that contract would need to be amended, not thrown out.

The pileup of things like rain-soaked couches and scuffed wooden furniture on the sidewalks promotes blight and crime, according to Curry. He said having people take their large unwanted objects directly to the dump will clear the sidewalk and some of the city's

social problems.

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Houses with one or two households would not have to pay any trash fees. Buildings with three to eight units, however, would have to pay \$100 each year for each household. The \$100 fee would be waived for a single owner-occupied residence in one of these large buildings.

Curry said anything larger will have to come up with an alternative trash system, such as a dumpster. Exceptions would be made to these rules on a case-by-case basis.

"I believe the ordinance is not fair to a landlord," said Councilor Marcus DiNatale. He said property taxes are

supposed to pay for things like trash disposal and said the \$100 fee for some apartments is taxing people twice for the same service.

"I think trash is part of the public service paid for by real estate taxes," said Council Rosemary

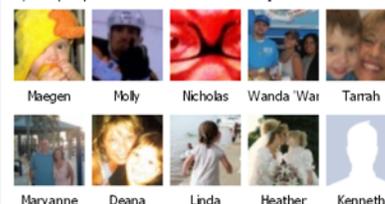
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Reynolds, who also objects to the ordinance. She said smaller landlords would be hurt by the fees, and doesn't like that they would have to pay even for unoccupied apartment.

DiNatale said cities like Leominster have a cart-based trash system with no fees, and Fitchburg could too.

"It's not that I'm opposed to clean streets or recycling," said DiNatale. He said its the details of the system he doesn't like, such as that the money raised would go into the general fund.

"This whole thing is really about collecting more tax revenue," he said.

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my_own_thoughts

It's a brilliant plan. A similar plan cleaned up Leominster virtually overnight. Landlords with more than 3 units are businesses, not just home owners.

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Dartanian

This would be a really good idea if Waste Management also took the people in the apartments when they picked up the trash.

1 day ago 1 Like

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RU'Serious

Fitchburg residents.....unless your on welfare...time to bend over again

2 days ago 1 Like

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Charles Sternaimolo

A large percentage of downtown residents do not bother with recycling as the once-every-two-weeks pick-up is inconvenient. Downtown residents rarely have enough storage for recycling and it is easier for them to just throw it away with the weekly trash. It would be an incentive to charge a small fine for people who ignore the recycling. As an avid recycler it pains me to see the flagrant disregard for our recycling program and environment. A City Hall representative I spoke with recently seemed clueless to the many residents ignoring the recycling program.

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King_REoL

Not a bad idea, to encourage more recycling.
Streetlights, and people's safety? Not that important.

[1 day ago](#)

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doctorc4

We can't turn on the street lights, but we can spend THOUSANDS of dollars on trash.
We can't open a pool for the families this summer, but we can spend 3 times that on trash.
Looks like I will be at tonight's meeting.

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bdaigle289

I would hope the city would provide a service at a small fee to take bigger items that are now taken for free like Sofa's and Chairs to the dump by calling a city provided number and paying a small fee. Many residents do not have the means to have a truck at their disposal plus the \$35 fee per year the city charges to go to the dump.

If not we can expect items to be dumped along the roads in the darkness of the night (no lights) or on other people's property. A small fee of say \$25.00 and a schedule of doing it in each section of the city on a monthly basis such as South side week 1 Cleghorn week 2 etc.

I have a truck and permit so it doesn't affect me but I'm sure it will affect others.

As for the trash barrel system I had it in San Diego for 20 years it works great but we had couches and other furniture dumped in the alleys all over the city, thus the need for a pick up and removal of large items program. Maybe this can be subsidized by the fees collected by the \$100 fee imposed on some users instead of it going to the slush fund of the city this would take away Rep Dinatale's concern of this just being a tax increase on the people of the city. I would charge the fee on any home with more than 2 tenants and charge even if the landlord lives in the building because we will have fraud and this removes all chances of it. A building with 4 or more must hire their own dumpsters for the tenants.

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my_own_thoughts

If they don't have the means to get it to the dump, how do they have the means to take it to another street to dump it????

[1 day ago](#) [in reply to bdaigle289](#)

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sonny brisebois, I'm a Fitchburger and Proud

Interesting

2 days ago

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Observers

What a Renaissance Man, he even finds garbage interesting.

2 days ago [in reply to sonny brisebois](#)

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Irrelevant

For people who don't read the articles but like to comment anyway: Houses with one or two households would not have to pay any trash fees.

2 days ago

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Sidreign

ah more tax just what we need

2 days ago

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- [my_own_thoughts](#) With all due respect, you chose to spend the \$3100 to buy this property to become a landlord, ie, business owner. Trash removal is a cost of doing business. Instead of paying \$100 per unit for a...

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- [Bobsie](#) What's really telling is he didn't even get my point about the spelling. I've

been asking him to change the RE to AS but he hasn't. Isn't there a truth in screen names law?

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