

# **PAY AS YOU THROW – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

## **Why is Durham concerned about its trash?**

- The Town spends a significant amount of money disposing of recyclable, reusable and compostable material as trash when these items could be much better managed at a lower financial and environmental cost.
- The financial cost of trash and recycling have grown significantly over the last several years. While we do not know the future of the recycling markets, we do know the trash disposal markets continue to tighten very quickly, which will drive prices well over \$100 per ton in the coming years.

## **What are Durham’s options for handling increased solid waste costs?**

1. We can appropriate more money to manage trash and recycling, which will require an increase in the tax rate or a reduction of spending in other areas of Town services.
2. We can establish utility pricing for trash, which will reduce costs and align incentives toward waste reduction, which will produce environmental and other benefits as well.

## **What is Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) and what are the Town’s goals?**

PAYT is a system where users pay for each unit of trash disposed rather than paying a flat annual fee or having the cost of the service exist within the tax rate. PAYT works like electricity, water, natural gas and other items – users pay only for what they use. The Town’s goals are:

1. Give residents a financial incentive to reduce the amount they throw away, thereby lowering the Town’s collection and disposal costs.
2. Generate revenue to help offset some of the cost of the Town’s solid waste program.
3. Promote equity in solid waste costs—residents pay for the waste they generate, not their neighbor’s trash.

## **How does PAYT work?**

- Residents will buy PAYT bags at stores and at the Department of Public Works.. The PAYT bags are used only for trash – not for recycling.
- Trash is either set out at the curb in the Town’s PAYT bags or is brought to the Transfer Station in these bags; all trash must be in the Town-approved bags.

## **Can residents still use other trash bags?**

No, only the special, Town-approved PAYT bags are permitted.

## **What size PAYT bags will be available and at what cost?**

- 33 gallon: This size fits into most standard large trash cans.
- 15 gallon: For smaller, kitchen-sized trash bins.

Cost to be determined.

### **Where are PAYT bags available?**

A list of retailers would be posted on the Town's website. If the program is approved, we would ask local stores to sell bags, would sell them at the Department of Public Works, and would also work with retailers outside of Durham to sell the bags as a convenience to residents.

### **Why will PAYT be good for Durham?**

PAYT will help stabilize Durham's solid waste costs. Residents who recycle more help both the environment and the Town.

### **How does PAYT affect large families?**

Large and small families can reduce their trash disposal costs several ways:

1. Recycle: Less trash will reduce the number of PAYT bags needed.
2. Recycle: Make purchases that reduce the amount of trash produced.
3. Reuse: Keep products out of the trash stream by continuing to find uses for them.
4. Compost: Fruit/vegetable waste can be home-composted and kept out of PAYT trash bags.

### **Is PAYT fair?**

Yes, PAYT is fairer than a single annual fee or trash paid for through property taxes. People who produce less household trash by recycling more will spend less for disposal because they buy fewer PAYT trash bags.

### **How does PAYT help the environment?**

PAYT provides an incentive for residents to recycle more. That means less trash and less environmental damage. By keeping recyclables out of our landfills, we also extend the useful life of our landfills, reducing the need to build new ones or, increasingly across New England, to ship waste out of state for disposal.

### **Why now?**

Disposal costs for trash are increasing and will continue to increase for the foreseeable future.

### **Will PAYT be easy and convenient?**

Yes. Residents will be able to buy PAYT bags at local stores where they routinely shop. Procedures for dropping trash and recycling at the curb or at the Transfer Station will not change.

### **How can residents learn to recycle more?**

Information will be available at the Town website, flyers will be distributed, and educational programs will be offered – including about learning to home-compost.

**Doesn't Durham do a good job of recycling now?**

Currently, Durham recycles about 28% of its waste. Many PAYT communities typically see a 35% to 45% rate.

**How will disposal of bulky waste and construction debris be affected?**

There will be no change.

**Doesn't PAYT increase illegal dumping?**

That has not been the case in other communities. Regionally and nationally, studies have shown that the vast majority of communities that start a PAYT program see no increase in illegal dumping. Illegal dumping exists in almost all communities today, without PAYT, but the majority of dumped materials is not residential in origin—it is usually bulky items (e.g. furniture, construction debris, etc.) that are not affected by a PAYT system. The Town will prioritize the continued cleanliness of Durham and will identify and pursue any offenders.

**What can keep my trash bill from rising every year?**

Better recycling and reduced trash volumes are key factors that will help manage costs.

**How will PAYT change recycling at the Transfer Station?**

There will be no change.

**How will we know PAYT is working?**

We will evaluate the program and issue a report after twelve (12) months.

**How will the Town administer the program? Will added staff be needed?**

The Town would not need added staff. The Town would need to hire a bag vendor to manufacture and distribute the Town's bags. That vendor would handle program administration, with existing Town staff providing oversight.

**How do I pay for my bags?**

Residents will buy bags at local stores and at the Department of Public Works.

**How will the Town enforce the program?**

The Town's curbside trash collector will only collect trash in Town-approved bags. You can place your bags on the curb or in a barrel of your choosing. All trash brought to the Transfer Station must be in Town-approved bags.

**Are there ways to help residents with financial hardships?**

The Town would implement programs to assist low income residents and seniors.

**How much profit do the stores make off the tags?**

The stores selling the PAYT bags will be prohibited from marking up, or making a profit on, the bags. The bag price is set by the Town Council and that is what the stores pay to acquire the bags for re-sale to the public. Stores provide these bags to residents at-cost because it provides them a competitive advantage; Durham residents will shop in the stores that sell Durham PAYT bags because they will need to purchase these bags.

**How will PAYT affect our tax rate?**

The PAYT program provides revenue and generates financial savings through reduced trash disposal costs. This is true even after considering the added cost of recycling. It is proposed that revenue and savings remain in the Department of Public Works to offset increases to the solid waste disposal budget.