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CITY OF MUSCATINE PRESS RELEASE

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CARDBOARD RECYCLING BINS REMOVED ... FOR NOW

Abuse of recycling area leads City to temporarily end program for Muscatine residents

MUSCATINE, Iowa – The City of Muscatine has offered a cardboard recycling area at the entrance to the Department of Public Works yard on Washington Street since late July but that service was terminated on Tuesday (Sept.10).

David Popp, Solid Waste/Collection and Drainage Manager for the City of Muscatine, said that Republic emptied the bins Tuesday morning and moved them to a secure storage area until a decision is made as to if, when, and where the service will be reinstated.

A mound of material was left on the ground to be picked up by Solid Waste staff.

“The boxes were not being broken down and trash was thrown in with the boxes,” Popp said. “The biggest issue, however, was that people were throwing the material on the ground when the bins were full.”

Signs were posted at both entrances to the recycling area with rules requiring those depositing cardboard to break down the boxes before putting them into one of the three bins available.

Residents were further urged to keep the broken down boxes at home if the bins were full, and wait until the bins were emptied (every Tuesday).

Styrofoam, plastic, and other materials (trash or other recycling items) were not allowed in the bins, but that did not stop some residents from putting those items into the bins or onto the ground if the bins were full.

“Since the recycling program ended at the Transfer Station we have looked for ways to accommodate those who want to recycle, especially cardboard,” Popp said. “And even though we had to end the program at this location, we are still looking into where and how we can reinstitute the program with more monitored access.”

Muscatine and Fruitland residents still have the option to use their bi-weekly curbside recycling collection by Republic Services to deposit cardboard and other recyclable material. Click here for [Recycling Guide](#) or visit the [Curbside Recycling](#) page on the City of Muscatine web site.

When the recycling bins were removed from the area in front of the Compost Facility at the end of June, city staff determined that the need to have additional bins for cardboard might be needed if residents filled their recyclable containers and still have more to recycle.

“We wanted an area that we could tell people where to deposit surplus cardboard recyclable material when they called to say their dumpster was full,” Popp said. “We didn’t want to advertise the location but the word got out and the area on Washington Street saw mounds of material in the bins and on the ground ever since.”

Eliminating the cardboard recycling program is not the desired option the City would like to take, but the market is not making it economically feasible to continue the service.

“Recycling is beneficial to the environment and keeps a lot of material out of the landfill that would fill that site up a lot quicker,” Popp said. “Although the recycling market is down at the present it is still a good investment into the future of the environment. The citizens of Muscatine and Fruitland can continue to help in recycling efforts by using their curbside recycling bins.”

Another option that has been discussed as part of changes to Compost Facility operations is to move the recycling center back to the Transfer Station but inside the Compost Facility fence.

That option was also suggested by Council member Kelcey Brackett at the City Council meeting on September 5 after the Council had earlier in the meeting approved the change in the Compost Facility operations.

“Why cannot we just move these bins back to inside the Compost Site fence where the attendant could watch them,” Brackett said.

The change in Compost Site operations will institute a user fee for non-residents and commercial tree services while keeping the service free to residents of Muscatine and Fruitland. Two regular part-time staff members would be assigned to monitor the Compost Site to verify residency and collect fees from non-residents and commercial tree services.

If the recycling bins were placed inside the Compost Site fence, the staff member would also be able to monitor the delivery of cardboard recycling and stop delivery once the bins are full. The area would also be electronically monitored for illegal dumping after hours.

“You have to remember that the Compost Facility shuts down over the winter and if those bins were located there, they would be unavailable for Muscatine and Fruitland residents during the winter months,” Popp said.

Other options are being explored by city staff but a lot depends on whether the recycling market makes a comeback or not.

“It is just not cost effective right now,” Popp said. “We have looked at providing the service ourselves but the cost in equipment and staff time cannot be covered in the market value of the recyclables at the present time.”

For the foreseeable future, Muscatine and Fruitland residents will have to rely on their curbside recycling.



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“Breaking down cardboard, whether by folding it, smashing it, tearing it up, or cutting it up, will take up less room in your curbside container,” Popp said.

Meanwhile, city staff will continue to look into all cost effective options.