LESSONS FROM THE FRONT: PAYT In Southold and on Long Island

SWANA-NY CHAPTER
Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) & Single Stream Programs

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Technical Training Session
Albany, NY – June 7, 2011
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PAYT Experiences on Long Island

GeographicOrientation

The Long Island Region
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Geographic Orientation

The “East End”
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PAYT Experiences on Long Island

- Existing Systems
  - Southold (pop. 30,000)
  - Shelter Island (2,500)
  - Southampton (60,000)
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**Existing Systems**

**Southold**

- Begun October 1993 to pay for out of town disposal following closure of LF (alternative to “tag” system)
- Required for residential waste
- 3 sizes:
  - 15 gal ($ .75) 8%
  - 33 gal ($ 1.50) 41%
  - 56 gal ($2.25) 51%
- Sold through local retailers (10% discount), Town facilities
- 53% of MSW through Town Transfer Station in 2010
- 55% of MSW Revenue ($536,000)
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Existing Systems

The Bags . .
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Existing Systems

“Town Bag” vending machine
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**Existing Systems**

**Southold (cont’d)**

**Initial Impacts**

1) 29% reduction in household garbage delivered to transfer station
2) 43% increase in household recyclables
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Existing Systems

Southold (cont’d)

Initial Impacts

- Overall increase of 75% in items that used to be in garbage
- Biggest increase found in paper
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Existing Systems

Southold (cont’d)
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Existing Systems

Southold (cont’d)

- Public Reaction - PRO!
  - Sensible concept (pay for what you use)
  - Best way to pay a brand-new cost!
  - Low tax rate for waste services (2nd homeowners)
  - Degree of Personal Control
  - Cost Assurance
  - Increased recycling rates
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Existing Systems
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Existing Systems

Southold (cont’d)

- Public Reaction – CON!
  - Bag quality (perceptions count!)
  - “Increased” use of plastic
  - “Big Government” (the return of the Burn Barrel!)
  - Lack of familiarity with concept; “It’s a public service, the Town should just do it”
  - Inconvenience
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**Existing Systems**

**Southampton**

- Began in 1993
- Required only for facility use
- Not required for curbside pickup
- 2 sizes: 33-gal - $2.90; 13-gal - $1.75
- 3 of 4 facilities in Town have no scales
- Not directly comparable
  -- optional; not a key waste management objective
  -- wide access to out-of-system disposal alternatives
  -- impacts hard to quantify
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Existing Systems

Shelter Island

- Began . . . 1992?
- 3 sizes: L- $3.75; M- $2.50; S- $1.75
- Optional
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Under Consideration?

Brookhaven
- Some Town Board interest
- Under study – pilot project?
- Complexity: population size and diversity; multiple dwellings; tax ‘culture’;
  revenue uncertainties; POLITICS

Bellport
- Actively considered in 2000
- Village collection contract
- Never adopted
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Prospects for Expansion

East End
- Best Suited (low population, limited bureaucracy)
- Common approach could improve chances of success (less ‘leakage’)
- Riverhead districts
- Political interest in taking more active role

Western Suffolk
- Well designed programs could work
- Regulatory priority – incentives?
- Pilot Project targeting ‘motivated’ community – the first to ‘stick their toe in the water’
- Self-financing assists budgeting (if revenue-neutral)
- Identify financial benefits to residents
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Prospects for Expansion

Nassau County

Problematic due to

- High fees if equivalent to current tax rate
- Revenue uncertainty risky for larger bureaucracy, varying services, esp. among the districts
- High taxes, public expectations; i.e., “for the $$ I’m paying, let the Town worry about it”
- Public cynicism that PAYT fees would be offset by tax reduction; feeling that any financial benefit would not be worthwhile
- Garbage ‘culture’ – you put it out, they take it! Why mess with a good (if overpriced) thing – the one thing government does well!
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Prospects for Expansion

So . . . what bag am I supposed to use?
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**Factors for Success**

2. **Fee Structure.** Revenue-neutral or revenue generating? Critical for public acceptance.
3. **Recycling.** PAYT works best together with broad, no-fee recycling program.
4. **Quality (bags).** Bags must work! One messy kitchen = a permanent enemy. Solid specs – NO RECYCLED CONTENT – testing.
5. **Contractor Reliability.** Identify reputable companies.
6. **Availability/Convenience.** Make available everywhere.
7. **Logistics.** Mfg. requirements, storage capabilities, ordering frequency. Try to build up surplus inventory for emergencies.
8. **Political Support.**
General Comments

- PAYT works, but not always as advertised (Tonjes) - @ 17%  
  -- illegal disposal  
  -- waste diversion (leakage)  
  -- low income, rental & multi-dwelling units  
  -- “dirtier” recyclables  
  -- resistance to gov’t. directives

- Southold success due to avoidance of significant new tax and ‘captive’ geographic area; small bureaucratic infrastructure

- Regulations/incentives required for significant expansion on LI
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What made it all possible. . . .