



Borough of Chatham

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PRESS RELEASE

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Chatham Borough Council to consider transition from “Green Bags” program at Monday’s council meeting.

Monday night’s Borough Council agenda includes a discussion of options for garbage disposal in the Borough, and one option to be considered will be a move away from the Borough’s long-standing green bags program.

While the Council will decide on the broad outlines of their approach at Monday’s meeting, changes (if any) will not be implemented until 2024, and details will be worked out with input from residents over the next year.

Currently, Borough residents must use special green garbage bags, which cost a premium to cover the costs associated with the disposal of trash. This approach, known as “pay as you throw,” means that residents who throw away more garbage pay more. As a result of the program, Chatham Borough has an excellent recycling rate.

However, the green bags program is not universally popular, and the Borough’s current solid waste contractor has faced issues with supply and quality of the bags. In addition, the program requires that the trucks be manned with two employees, one of whom physically collects the bags and throws them into the truck. With skyrocketing labor costs and safety issues associated with this role, the Borough decided that moving towards automated garbage collection might be beneficial.

“We don’t want to lose the ‘pay as you throw’ component of our garbage program,” said Council member Jocelyn Mathiasen, “but there may be a better, more cost-effective way to accomplish this goal than the green bags.”

The Borough conducted a survey on the green bags program in 2021, which registered strong opinions for and against the green bags, but the Council decided that it needed cost information to better assess what approach to take. “We issued a short-term award and then conducted an RFP (Request for Proposal) that included several options, including the green bags and other alternatives. With the results of the RFP, we now have cost information to pair with feedback from residents,” said Mathiasen. “Unfortunately, the state gives us very little time from the receipt of proposals to the awarding of a contract, so we are moving quickly.”

Survey respondents supported the green bags by a slight margin, but 32% said that they would support this approach only if the cost was the same as an alternative program.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
I like the green bags program and think it should be continued even if it costs more	23.35% 202
I would continue the green bags program only if there is no cost difference	32.02% 277
I do not like the green bags program and would not advocate continuing it	38.84% 336
Other (please specify)	5.78% 50
TOTAL	865

In addition, the survey revealed that there were many residents who absolutely hated the green bags. Full results of the survey are available at the following link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-J6TLLLDV9/>

The Council will be awarding the garbage collection contract on Monday, but the RFP and bids covered both the green bags option and alternatives, according to Mathiasen, so they were not locked in to one approach based on the bid results.

This is a tough decision for the Borough, said Mathiasen. “People have very strong feelings about the green bags. No matter what we do, some residents will be unhappy.” She concluded: “Our goal is to decide what we believe is in the Borough’s best long-term interests and then work with residents to address any concerns.”

Borough residents may attend the meeting in-person at Borough Hall on Monday at 7:30pm or can tune in and comment via zoom. [Mayor & Council Meeting Zoom Link.](#)

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