

“Why Increase Henry County Garbage Fees?”

When I came into office a little over ten years ago, the monthly fee for garbage pickup was \$14.00. We went to the single operator system a few years back and increased the fee to \$15.00 to help defer part of the cost of the two new trucks. I’ve been asked this week why a \$2.00 per month increase is needed when we have \$800,000 in the account. That’s a fair question and it deserves a thorough response.

We will soon order a new garbage truck to replace one of the two that will have over 100,000 miles on them when the new truck gets here. That alone would not necessitate the increase. Let’s take a look at the world in which we all now live. Annual repairs to garbage trucks that were under \$50,000 just a few years ago have now doubled. Our sanitation labor costs are up 25% (if you can even find drivers with CDL’s.) A gallon of fuel has also doubled in the past six years. Our insurance costs and the expense of taking garbage to the transfer station are both up substantially. We’ve been asked for years why Henry County doesn’t offer a pick-up service for household items (old refrigerators, sofas, limb debris...we are told that ‘Headland and Abbeville do.’ We have a grapple truck on order so that we can soon offer that. We are hearing that the Coffee County landfill may soon increase prices to local counties that send their garbage down there. Henry County is one that does. We are mandated to dig two new cells at our construction and demolition landfill (this is not where household garbage is accepted.) The cost of digging the new cells combined with the cost of the garbage and grapple trucks will take 75% of the \$800,000. All these expenses (as well as others) must be paid using the balance of that money.

I’m told that one local official has stated that our garbage fees may soon be increased again. That is not true. There will be no further increases in the standard monthly fee. We are, however, looking at the way we issue and charge for ‘extra’ cans. All present Henry County sanitation customers have been provided one new 95 gallon can at no cost to them. We offer a ‘second can’ option for those citizens who would like to have two. With the growth we are seeing in the south end of Henry County, customers are routinely asking for the second can. In the past we charged \$75.00 for the can with no extra monthly charge. Now every ‘second can’ we provide costs us in excess of \$100.00 by the time it is bought, prepped and delivered to the customer. We lose more than \$25.00 on every ‘second can’ we issue. Two neighboring counties charge \$12.50 and \$14.00 monthly for the second can. My recommendation is that we take a look at our ‘second can’ policy to see if we should continue to lose money – not only at the point of sale but every month that we service that extra can at no charge. I live in Headland where the ‘second can’ is offered for \$10.00 per month. It is our choice to pay for that convenience.

Last week we called several counties and cities in our area. The average regular monthly garbage rate for the counties and cities who border us is \$19.70. When the Henry County rate changes to \$17.00 on May 1st, we will still be below the regional average. Our routes run weekly – garbage is picked up 52 times a year. The increase of \$2.00 per month computes to less than 50 cents per week – a single cup of coffee costs four times that much. Think about it.

Thirty Day Review:

- Probate activity for January: six wills probated, five administrations, five final settlements, 19 miscellaneous hearings, five guardianships, two name changes
- If your last name begins with 'C' or 'E', March is the month to renew your tags.
- Feb. 3 – ACCA board meeting – Montgomery
- Feb. 9 – ACCA district meeting – Troy
- Feb. 10 – met with Judge Peterson and state officials to discuss renovation of the downstairs courtroom area
- Feb. 15 – February Administrative meeting – Herndon Building Courtroom
- Feb. 16 – served as a panelist on the Alabama Community College Association's annual 'Diversity Conference' – Jeff State Community College (Clanton campus)
- Feb. 17 – interview with Forbes Magazine about the positive impact Great Southern Wood has had on Abbeville and Henry County
- Feb. 20 – President's Day holiday
- Feb. 21 – February Commission meeting – Annex Building Courtroom
- Feb. 23 – HCEDA board meeting – ATTA Library
- March 1 – we hosted a three-hour ADECA meeting with local elected officials, potential internet service providers and citizens to discuss broadband expansion – Abbeville Methodist
- March 1 – joined several elected officials for lunch at the Abbeville Chamber meeting
- March 2 – attended marketing meeting for the ATTA S.T.E.M. Library
- March 2 – served as a judge at the 'YellaWood Wild Game Cook Off' – 'The Plant' in Dothan
- March 6 – attended the 'Eggs and Issues' Legislative breakfast at Wiregrass Rehab
- March 7 – attended the Wallace College Foundation Board meeting – Wallace campus
- March 8 – attended the 'Cakes & Conversations' meeting with state legislators – ACCA
- March 9 – attended SEARP&DC Executive Committee and Board meeting - Dothan

Dates to Remember:

- March 10 – annual Abbeville Methodist Church mission dinner/ auction – 6:00 – Abbeville Methodist Family Life Center
- March 16 – Henry County Youth Leadership 'Local Industry Day' – Henry County
- March 16 – Henry Co. Commission Administrative meeting – 10:00 – Herndon Building
- March 21 – Henry Co. Commission meeting – 10:00 – Annex Building Courtroom
- March 22 – Henry County E911 board meeting – Headland Municipal Building
- March 23 – 'Leadership Alabama' luncheon – Wallace College