



The Chairman's Corner

by

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SOLID WASTE – NEW BUILDING, FOOD COMPOSTER

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After years of working on funding, compounded by the pandemic and supply chain issues, I'm happy to say that a new solid waste building and an EcoRich ER-1000 composter are headed to the Columbia County Solid Waste Department's Greenport Transfer Station. Should all go well, the building should be complete roughly the first week in August.

Funded prior to the pandemic, the building project then fell by wayside, but now it's a go thanks to American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money and a 50 percent Department of Environmental Conservation grant that had been approved, then pulled, but is now back in place.

The new building, said Solid Waste Department Director Jolene Race, "is a top-load building designated specifically for recyclable material that we ship out." For years, the county had handled recyclables in conjunction with a private company in Commerce Park, but that ended eight or so years ago, she said.

Race estimates the EcoRich composter will be delivered and in place in approximately four to six months. The composter is designed to hold up to 1,000 pounds of food scrap, which is heated and churned electrically for 24 hours, then allowed to sit for 21 days, becoming "more of a nutrient than a compost that you can add to your soil. It allows us to keep food scraps out of the waste stream. We hope to be able to expand this program to restaurants."

County Board of Supervisors Public Works Committee Chair Ron Knott said the cost of the new building and associated equipment needed to run things is expected "right around \$400,000," while the composter and costs associated with its operation are approximately \$77,000, for which the DEC grant calls for 75 percent reimbursement.

Supervisor Knott said the new building comes out of need and addresses the issue – because of only having a single building -- of constantly juggling trash and recyclable.

As it currently stands, he said, "when they're loading recyclables, we have to pile trash out in the parking lot, and then the wind blows the stuff all around and you have to deal with that mess. Then they move the trailers in and you start piling garbage in the parking lot – people end up having to back in and drop their garbage into a pile."

With one building dedicated to recycling and one to trash, rather than one for the entire operation, that situation will be alleviated as the flow runs more smoothly and time is not wasted on cleaning up and otherwise moving trash.

Director Race added that once the new building is in place, the traffic pattern at the Greenport station may face some adjustments to better accommodate commercial and private residents as they enter and depart.