



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Operational overhaul for RNC – all sites stay for now

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RNC Executive Director Linda Ritz White, left, and Marcia Dougan, President of the Board of Directors, apply the labels to their first six single stream containers, which go into service in Fremont in mid-December.

After months of uncertainty, Recycling for Newaygo County (RNC) has announced that all eight existing drop sites around and surrounding Newaygo County will remain open—for now.

To achieve this, RNC revealed a complete operational overhaul at its Annual General Meeting Oct. 16. The nonprofit will become a single stream recycling *facilitator* instead of a *processor* of recycling materials.

Executive Director Linda Ritz White said as RNC coffers teetered toward the red last spring, it became apparent to the Board of Directors that the nonprofit's existing strategy of collecting, hauling, and processing in house was not viable. She said the company's doors would likely have closed in July without a generous anonymous donation, and cutting corners and staff hours.

"Recycling is not a profitable business in the best of times," said the director. "The price we fetch for materials has gone steadily down over the past few years. Our

equipment is aging and costing a lot more in repairs and maintenance, and will need replacing soon. The writing is on the wall.”

She said contracting to have the materials hauled away instead of processing them will dramatically cut costs, even with zero revenues from material sales.

The conversion will begin in mid-November at RNC’s Fremont location on Cherry Street. Ms. Ritz White said an anonymous \$10,000 grant enabled the organization to purchase six of the 24 recycling containers it will need for the conversion. The conversion will unfold site by site as funds to purchase more containers become available through the sale of equipment RNC will no longer need.

RNC has contracted with Fremont-based Cart-Right, LLC, who have delivered curbside recycling service to City of Fremont residents since 2007. Cart-Right will haul the drop site materials to Kent County Recycling, a state of the art materials recovery facility in Grand Rapids.

The director said keeping the Fremont, Brooks Township, White Cloud, Garfield Township, Grant, Croton Transfer Station, Holton, and Hesperia drop sites operational for now is made possible by Fremont Area Community Foundation (FACF) continuing funding in 2014-2015.

“The Foundation has generously financed up to one-third of our annual budgetary needs since our doors opened in 2004. The Foundation funded our start! They are strong advocates of environmental health, and in fact, Natural Resources is one of their five ‘focus areas’. It is our privilege to partner with them in improving the environmental health of our corner of the world.”

Foundation funding for Oct. 1, 2014-Sep. 30, 2015 is \$70,000, plus up to \$20,000 matched at 50 cents on the dollar that RNC raises through donations. However, the Foundation has notified the nonprofit that this will be their last grant in this form.

“They are getting one-third more funding requests than they can meet, and these decisions are always difficult. We completely understand. The folks over there, Todd Jacobs, Carla Roberts, and others, have been tremendously helpful amid this restructuring process, and we are confident they will continue to contribute to our work in some form as we move forward. It is simply time that RNC becomes more self-sustaining.”

The director’s goal is to keep all the drop sites open going forward. How many will remain and where after autumn 2015 will depend on the success of the business plan ratified by the Board. The plan calls for increased fundraising along with discussions with municipalities and townships.

Ms. Ritz White speaks excitedly of fundraising activities and events already in the planning stages. She is confident that staff, board members and volunteers can make a lot of fun out of raising dollars for recycling efforts.

RNC also set a two-year goal to increase memberships to 1,000 from the current 350. An estimated 10,000 residents are using the 24/7 (except Croton) open access drop sites.

“Even doubling what we currently raise through memberships will be a huge boost. I believe more of us can come up with \$50 a year to contribute to our kids’ environmental legacy.

“Every pound we recycle is one pound less of our natural resources we have to mine! And no small measure of business development here in Michigan is attributable to commodities created from recyclables.”

The director says the organization is blessed with several dedicated annual contributors of \$100-\$300+ through its Friends of Recycling program. It is working on strengthening the program and seeking additional grants and philanthropic gifts as well. Interested parties can contact the director at 231.924.5822, and RNC’s mailing address is PO Box 217, Fremont MI 49412.

RNC’s business services including shredding services will also be overhauled and expanded. Styrofoam, CFL light bulbs, batteries, and other hard to recycle items will continue to be collected. Other considerations include a collection point for bulk loads of paper and cardboard, electronics, and hazardous waste off season, and an educational “center”.

The director added the nonprofit is seeking to partner with other community organizations for mutual interests and benefit.

Once processing is eliminated, RNC will relocate its business pursuits from Cherry Street in Fremont to a more affordable location. No location has been announced, but she says talks are underway.

Cart-Right Owners Mark Ramsey and Lola Harmon-Ramsey began sorting recyclables curbside with a trailer in 2007, and switched to single stream recycling in the winter of 2012.

“We are excited to work with Recycling for Newaygo County,” said Ms. Harmon-Ramsey. “By working together we can ensure recycling becomes more efficient and easier for all. Our natural resources are so important.”

How the conversion and single stream recycling will work: Currently, there are two or three recycling trailers at each drop site. The trailers will be removed and each site will be equipped with two to four recycling containers based on anticipated volume. Cart-Right will collect twice weekly at busier sites, and once weekly at lower volume sites.

Sorting will no longer be required, and more materials will be accepted including all 1-7 plastics, cardboard, paper, aluminum, tin, and glass. Polystyrene (Styrofoam) will not be accepted.

Recycling for Newaygo County

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