

September 10, 2009

Dear Barry:

We appreciate your willingness to meet. Of course, you know that Orange County Voice has been supporting the users of the Bradshaw Quarry Convenience Center as they've presented their case to the BoCC. We've hesitated to take a prominent role but we believe that closing the BQCC is a mistake. We believe that you are genuinely interested in getting this right and would like your counsel on how to best move forward.

We now have the facts on the county's solid waste (SW) plan, and believe that the BoCC has been misinformed. We're assuming that's why the Board decided to eliminate an inexpensive and important resource.

We realize that commissioners are hesitant to reopen the BQCC issue. Schools, libraries and other topics are more pressing to the majority of citizens in the county. However, we've learned that the basis for closing BQCC comes in part from an incomplete plan that has not been vetted with SWAB, rural residents or the BoCC. Closing BQCC may offer nominal savings but it opens the door to a "one size fits all" service plan that misapplies urban SW service models (and fees) to the remote rural parts of the county.

Here's what we learned about the county's plan at last week's SWAB meeting. (This information was not in the BoCC reports.)

- BQCC serves roughly 1500 households. At a cost of \$35,000 a year, that's less than \$25 per household. If it operates 2-3 days a week, it's less than \$15 per household. Even if the costs were \$50,000, it's still less than \$35 per household - a far cry from the taxes and the \$37 3R fee that the rural residents currently contribute to the county's SW program. It's not fancy, but BQCC is a cost effective way to service this remote rural community.
- The county's proposal to offer curbside recycling adds costs and degrades service. It's free this year - but in 2010, the county will apply the additional 3R fee -which is currently \$38 per household. The fee will be used to fund an additional truck and driver. According to county reports, only 40% of the 13,500 households that pay for curbside recycling actually use it. In the BQCC service area, the percentage is likely to be a lot lower - in part due to the long gravel roads and driveways. Residents who don't want the service cannot opt out of the program.

At Thursday's meeting, SWAB questioned the county's SW Work Group Plan. SWAB asked if there was any input from the rural community to the Plan. The answer was "no", that the plan was "developed by the SW work group working with town elected

officials". SWAB asked that the plan be presented to rural residents - recognizing that the proposed service model doesn't work. We raise this because tenets from this plan were prematurely released in Gayle Wilson's BQCC closure memo that was attached to the Sept 1 BoCC documents. (I've copied SWAB member Doug Guild so that he might add comments and perspective).

SWAB questioned the core features of the plan including:

- Extending vendor franchises and curbside recycling services to the rural community. These services are expensive. Plus they are impractical given the large parcels, long gravel roads and driveways that characterize the rural sections of the county (including BQCC users). The narrow gravel roads are a safety hazard for collection trucks and it's simply not practical for residents to roll carts and hand carry bins to the end of their roads.
- Spending millions of dollars modernizing four convenience centers with compactors, new services, and resurfacing. While some of the upgrades may make sense in the long term, the plan is not ready and costs, fee impacts and alternatives have not been discussed. In the short term, we're sure everyone wants to fund schools before investing in "super convenience centers".
- Adding many new fees - such as franchising fees, "pay to throw" fees, bulky item fees and others to pay for the impractical changes.

The incomplete and unvetted version of the SW Work Group Plan happens to be the source of the pretty charts with the concentric circles that shows four convenience centers in the future. There's no basis for eliminating the BQCC center or consolidating it with the Ferguson center. Nor has there been any input from the northern rural community about the sufficiency of two centers or the proposed locations. We are pleased the topic is being discussed and that SWAB immediately recognized the misfit with the rural community. There's still time to correct the misuse of this plan to justify closing BQCC.

SWAB members agreed that rural input is needed and will work with OCV to get access to rural residents and businesses. What's important at this point is recognizing that the long range plan is a "work in process" that does not yet reflect the needs of rural communities. As is, the plan raises fees for rural residents by nearly tenfold and sharply reduces the relevance and effectiveness of service.

OCV is confident that we can work with SWAB to get good input and redirect the plan for rural services in the long term SW plan. But we need your help in the short term.

We hoped this would be a simple issue for the BoCC and we've been hesitant to tie you up during these very busy times. But the fallout from uninformed decision is harmful and irreversible. It perpetuates the one-size-fits-all thinking that overlooks rural communities and raises costs for everyone. We are committed to engage actively and constructively to help reverse the decision.

We hope, given the facts, that you agree that keeping BQCC open makes sense. We're hoping that you will work with us to support the BQCC community?

We appreciate your insight into this matter and would be happy to meet and discuss it further. Please let us know what you believe our next steps should be.

Sincerely,

Bonnie

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Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. - Margaret Mead