

Many citizens have expressed concerns about the new waste disposal fees charged by County Waste. The County Administrator contacted County Waste leadership and received this explanation:

This situation was the direct result of County Waste of Southwest Virginia purchasing many companies over the last 7-8 years. Just about every one of our nonpublic company competitors in most of our markets have been flocking to us begging us to buy them over the last several months because they are losing their shirts right now. Their problems are similar to our problem in that they need to materially adjust their pricing to cover what has happened to their costs of doing business. In the meantime, the recycling markets in the USA totally collapsed in the 4th quarter of 2017, and have mostly trended downward since that time. There is also a very large shortage of CDL drivers and mechanics in this Country and that has driven up wage rates for these positions significantly higher than the rate of inflation - we have markets where our average wage rates have gone up over 30% over the last 18 months. Based upon all of this information, we made a decision to fix these issues as we were heading into 2019. We decided to standardize our services to the going market rate (the rate that we have been charging new customers over the six months), which includes the costs for continuing to provide curbside recycling services.

In addition, a \$1 per month charge for continuing to receive a monthly paper invoice/statement has been instituted. Our Company mails out over 300,000 invoices each month at a great cost to our Company. We are trying to encourage our customers to move to paying by credit card or electronic payment, and get away from mailing out a monthly invoices to most of our customers. As a Company, we have invested heavily into technology that makes us more productive and lowers our cost of doing business. For our senior customers that will not or do not have the ability to move into the where the world is headed, we have waived these \$1 per month charges if they call us to let us know that they do not have the ability to make payments like this.

The appearance is that we are gouging customers, and the truth is that many customers were paying a rate significantly below the going market rate. Retrospectively, we should have been increasing these rates gradually over the last several years instead of trying to fix our problem overnight. The net results would have been the same, but the appearances would have been much better.