



Run that by me one more time...

Just like David Letterman’s nightly top ten list, staff of the Auditor-Treasurer’s Office have their own top ten list of taxpayer questions when tax statements hit the mail annually in March. By far, one of the most frequently asked questions is **“what is the \$66 Solid Waste Service Fee for?”**

The answer is this \$66 annual fee funds about 63% of the \$2.6+ million annual cost of garbage disposal and recycling programs in Cass County. Whether a homeowner pays a local garbage hauler for pickup or opts to self-haul to the county owned transfer site, that front end transportation service/cost is only the beginning of the waste stream. To get the best bang for the buck, services are provided by contracting with the private sector. In addition to the contracted costs of operating the transfer station, the waste disposal contract provides for the transportation and disposal of garbage at a “state of the art” landfill.

Consistent with state policies and counties across Minnesota, Cass County offers a wide variety of recycling programs ranging from those available at your local recycling stop to those dealing with more problematic materials such as fluorescent light bulbs, electronic components, and other household hazardous wastes. The solid waste fee also pays for related services such as mobile hazardous waste collection offered in our various communities during the summer months, environmental education efforts, response to nuisance complaints and other solid waste programs of the Cass County Environmental Services Department. All these carry a price tag for transportation and delivery to various recycled materials markets or proper disposal of waste materials.

The solid waste fee appears on the annual tax statement on the line entitled “special assessment” due to space limitations on the form. The fee is not a special assessment as defined under state law but is authorized under Minnesota Statutes 400.08.

A summary of the 2011 county solid waste budget appears below.

History: A Perspective-The Cass County Board made the decision in 1990 to shift county solid waste costs away from property tax levy dollars to an annual fee basis as authorized under state law. In those early years as the most pressing solid waste issues were dealt with, the fee funded landfill closure costs and helped to pay for the construction of the waste transfer/recycling facility, as well as on-going disposal and recycling costs. With those debts now long retired, for many years the fee has funded current operating budget costs and fund balance designation for future maintenance/replacement/expansion of the present transfer facility.

2011 Cass County Solid Waste Budget

<u>Revenues</u>		<u>Expenditures</u>	
Solid Waste Service Fee	\$1,650,000	Personnel costs (in-house)	\$ 233,208
Tip Fee	850,000	Overhead and allocated costs	211,000
Transfer Station Fees	32,500	Capital Expense & Related ESD Programs	270,292
MN SCORE Grant	<u>75,000</u>	Contractual & Professional Services	<u>1,893,000</u>
TOTAL	\$2,607,500	(for transportation & disposal of garbage & recyclables)	
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