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Subject: Leadership on trash issue
Date: Monday, March 12, 2007 10:11 AM

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

I'm a newcomer to Rockville, having moved to 312 West Edmonston Drive last August. I purchased the house from the original owner, a wonderful elderly woman named Shirley Armstrong, who bought the house with her husband in 1958. I was lucky to have a couple of lengthy talks with Mrs. Armstrong before we closed on the house, and to hear her many stories about what makes living in Rockville a special treat.

When my wife and I moved in August, we had no idea that we would become part of a trash pilot. In fact, I didn't learn about it until a survey on the pilot showed up in my mailbox. I didn't respond to the survey because I had insufficient experience with the pilot and no experience with the previous service. However, as I testified at the March 5th Council meeting, I've had enough experience now to say without reservation that the service is superb, and the experiment is a success!

I am equally happy with the discussion that has taken place about the proposed changes to our trash service. It's great to see so much citizen involvement and an attentive Mayor and Council.

That said, it seems to me that we've about exhausted the arguments for and against the various proposed changes, and now we need you all to step up to the plate and show some leadership. One of the striking things about the views of the citizens is that those of us in the pilot are almost uniformly happy with the service and generally supportive of the direction of the proposed changes, while those who haven't participated in the pilot are worried about getting less service or lower quality service. This isn't a great mystery. We all are somewhat fearful of change. But there are good reasons to make changes to our trash collection system, and I am hoping and expecting to see you all provide the leadership necessary to make these changes.

I would suggest the following as an operating principle -- trash collection ought to be run like a business. Quite simply, you ought to provide the service that the customers demand and are willing to pay for. Both parts of that equation are equally important. The most attractive aspect of the proposed changes is the effort to link level of service and price. It's an innovative idea that provides all of us with the right incentives to minimize trash, maximize recycling, and reduce injuries to employees. It makes us think about the cost of the service that we demand from government, and by doing so, it makes us more responsible members of our community.

I only need service once per week. There's only three of us, and we recycle as much as we put out in the trash. That's all the service I want, and that's all I'm willing to pay for. I've heard many other

people say that they need service twice per week. You should provide it to them, and they should pay the extra cost. I should not be taxed to subsidize their service. The fee charged should be commensurate with the service provided.

To any of you are not willing to support this operating principle, and instead are inclined to continue with the current system with all of its bad incentives, I will simply say that you will not have my support in the next election. You have both the opportunity and the responsibility to make some sensible changes to an out-dated system. The only question in my mind as a newcomer to Rockville is whether you have the leadership capacity to do this.

In closing, if there is some other way that I can be helpful in making this decision, please let me know. Just sending an email to you all seems insufficient. My contact info is below. FYI, I am home working on my house M-W of this week.

Best regards,

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