Recycling change called ‘unfair’ to businesses

BY MEGHAN NELSON
AND ELISABETH WALDON
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITERS

For the past year, recycling sites across Montcalm County have been closing or relocating. The county’s Solid Waste Management Planning Committee recently made a change affecting the five remaining sites, and each recycling container is labeled with that change: “Commercial use prohibited. Residential use only.”

The Solid Waste Committee on July 20 voted to post signs indicating recycle sites are for residential use only, effective Sept. 20. According to meeting minutes, committee members discussed the fact that commercial usage has increased at county recycling sites since the closing of Recycle World in September 2016.

Resource Recovery Coordinator Cameron Tendwalde told The Daily News the committee decided to close bins from commercial use due to the bins constantly being filled.

“We have had bins being filled by businesses the day after they were dumped,” he said. “This was leaving no room for residents to recycle their cardboard and other recyc-

Raymi Sunabe, owner of The Peddler’s Patch in Lakeview, breaks down one of the many boxes her business goes through. She said it’s unfair she will no longer be able to take cardboard and other recyclables to Montcalm County recycling sites due to a recent change.

SEE RECYCLING, PAGE 2
Montcalm County's Solid Waste Management Planning Committee recently announced the five county-run recycling sites will no longer accept commercially generated recyclables effective Sept. 20.

RECYCLING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

bles. We also had problems with commercial facilities leaving stacks of cardboard on the outside of the bins. Since this was happening, we decided as a committee to shut the bins down to commercial use." Edmore Village Manager Neil Rankin did not expect there to be any pushback from businesses and said he didn't know of any businesses who used the recycling containers.

"We've always said the containers are for residential use only," Rankin said. "We can't monitor it if someone else goes at 3 a.m. and puts some cardboard in there. I always see tons and tons of cars, but never any businesses. They're always residents of the village or the area."

However, Robin Miller, proprietor and photographer for Triumph Design Studio in Edmore, said she was unaware of the changes, and that her business as well as Miller & Associates, where her husband Chris Miller works, both use the recycling containers.

Ryumi Sunabe, owner of The Peddler's Patch in Lakeview, found out about the new rule when she went to recycle cardboard from her business. She was loading cardboard into one of the recycling containers and didn't notice the sign, but a Department of Public Works employee pointed out the new sticker to her.

"It's unfair," Sunabe said. "What are we going to do with all of our shipments and all of our boxes? We have a lot of boxes. We pay a lot of taxes. I follow all the rules. I always break the boxes down, I clean up my mess. I've even cleaned up other people's messes. I don't think it's fair. Why do homeowners get to do it, but business owners don't?"

Emily Griffith, a Lakeview resident who stopped by The Peddler's Patch, said she was concerned about the decision to prohibit business owners to use recycling made her anxious about the fate of the containers for residents to use. She wondered if the village could incorporate personal recycling containers to be picked up along with the curbside trash pickup.

"If we offered that in Lakeview, the business owners could use the containers," Griffith said. "I'd pay extra for that in a heartbeat."

She also wondered what it would cost to add recycling containers, so there would be enough reciprocals for residents and businesses to use together.

Although the new rules have been posted at Lakeview's recycling site, Lakeview Village Manager Shay Gallagher said the village's Department of Public Works employees won't actively be monitoring who uses the containers.

"Our view is that it's a county-run facility and we just host it," Gallagher said. "Any rule changes are done by the county. We don't really have a role in that. Nothing gives me or the DPW the authority to enforce it."

Gallagher pointed out that even with the businesses using the recycling containers, moving the location to the DPW facility has minimized the amount of dumping — a problem several municipalities are facing.

"I think it's better since it moved," Sunabe agreed. "It's because people can't just throw their car seats or Christmas trees in there."

Montcalm County's five recycling sites are available at the following locations:

- Carson City: Department of Public Works, 818 N. Williams St.
- Crystal Township: Crystal Community Center, 206 S. Main St.
- Edmore: Southwest corner of former Hitachi property on Quicksilver Lane off Noff Road.
- Lakeview: Department of Public Works, 10300 North St.
- Stanton: City parking lot, Walnut and Camburn streets.

mnelson@staffordgroup.com
ewaldon@staffordgroup.com